

PLATO'S LIFE AND THOUGHT



“ We are not born into this world for ourselves alone . . . ”
(Ninth Letter: see p. 55)

[frontispiece

Plato's Life and Thought

with a translation of
The Seventh Letter

by

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LONDON

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL LTD.

BROADWAY HOUSE, 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C.

First published 1949

To
R. L. ASHCROFT

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*Printed in Great Britain
by J. W. Arrowsmith Ltd., Bristol*

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PREFACE

THIS book contains a life of Plato, and a discussion of the salient points of interest in most of his works. There is a chapter explaining the origin of his central doctrine, the Theory of Ideas, and a translation of his *Seventh Letter*, which is now generally accepted as genuine; the letter gives a vivid account of many incidents in Plato's life, and is also valuable for the study of his thought.

The book is intended not only for students of Plato, who may find a brief general survey or reference book of Platonism, explaining the purpose of the dialogues and incorporating the results of recent scholarship, useful as a background to the study of particular works, but also for all those who are interested in Greek philosophy but have no knowledge of Greek. In Part II, while trying to avoid being superficial, I have concentrated on the main purpose of each work, and hope that the result will provide useful summaries, conveniently concise. A great deal has been written about Plato, but much of it is very detailed and contained in large volumes, while some of it is too elementary and vague for the amateur philosopher who requires a more definite answer to the questions, "Who was Plato?" and "What did he say?"

The translation of the *Seventh Letter* is based on the text of my edition, which differs little from Burnet's Oxford text. Variations from Burnet that involve a special rendering are mentioned in footnotes.

I have not attempted to apply Plato's principles to the questions of to-day, but merely to study him in his own surroundings, and his philosophy as an answer to the

problems of his age. I should perhaps mention that I do not hold the Burnet-Taylor theory which identified the Platonic with the historical Socrates, a theory which is not, I think, generally accepted nowadays. My interpretation will therefore differ a good deal in some respects from Professor Taylor's large and valuable book, *Plato, the Man and his Work*. A brief bibliography will be found on page 191. I also include references, but have relegated these to the end of the book. I cite authorities from time to time, to indicate the sort of evidence on which our knowledge is based: their dates will be found in the index.

I have to thank Professor T. A. Sinclair of Belfast for most helpful criticism; the Oxford University Press for permission to use quotations from Professor Cornford's translation for all the excerpts that I give of the *Republic*; and Messrs. Heinemann for permission to use R. G. Bury's translation (Loeb edition) for all excerpts of the *Laws*.

Fettes College
Edinburgh
January 1949

R. S. BLUCK

INTRODUCTORY

A GREAT man", wrote Disraeli,¹ "is one who affects the mind of his generation: whether he be a monk in his cloister agitating Christendom, or a monarch crossing the Granicus and giving a new character to the pagan world." If one's effect on the mind of one's generation be the true measure of greatness, then Plato was pre-eminently great. Directly and indirectly he has affected the minds of many generations, by his writings, by founding the first university in the world, and most of all by his teaching, which was one of the noblest answers to materialism and to purely mechanistic explanations of life that have ever been given.

Plato's greatest pupil, Aristotle, was a man of a very different frame of mind from his master, and believed in empirical methods more than Plato did, but in many of the subjects that that great thinker explored, Plato had shown the way. We may say that one of the ways in which Plato affected later generations was through Aristotle. But Aristotle's works were practically unknown in western Europe until the thirteenth century, and Plato's *Timæus* seems to have been the only philosophical work of the great age of classical Greece with which the early Middle Ages were well acquainted. One source of information about Plato will have been Cicero, who greatly admired him and clearly regarded him as greater than Aristotle. Plato's school, the Academy, changed the character of its teaching very considerably after Plato's death, but a good deal of genuinely Platonic thought was taken over by the Stoics, and Cicero seems to have considered their philosophy to have been very similar to Platonism in

all but name. The Neoplatonists of the third and fourth centuries A.D., Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, developed Plato's teaching into a more mystical philosophy.

Aristotle, Cicero, the Stoics, and the Neoplatonists all helped to spread the influence of elements of Plato's thought. But even in early times Platonism had a very important direct influence, as it affected the early Church. Following the example of Philo, who had tried to combine Judaism with Greek philosophy, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215 A.D.) was anxious to combine with Christian faith such elements of Greek thought as were not incompatible with it and seemed to be true. To quote Edwyn Bevan, Clement "loved his Plato as well as his New Testament, and declared that for the Greeks philosophy had been the tutor leading to Christ, as St. Paul said that the Law had been for the Jews."² His successor Origen (c. 185-253) did the same, but went too far in the eyes of stricter brethren, and died of the effects of torture. Nevertheless, later Christian teachers took over a good many of the beliefs of these early pioneers, and Greek philosophic thought, which constituted most of the only known form of higher education, continued to have its effect. Indeed the writings of St. Paul himself, who was a native of Tarsus, are largely tinged with the Stoicism of a former resident of that city, by name Chrysippus. In the Hellenistic age, when Greek was a widespread language, the thought of the Greeks and the faith of the Jews were bound to meet, and very often to combine. The result was not altogether bad.

To those who helped to carry over elements of Platonism, however slight and however much disguised, into the Middle Ages, we may now add some of the early Christians, and include among them no less a person than St. Augustine. The influence of Plato can be clearly seen in his *De Civitate Dei*. Platonism next appears in a pronounced form among the Cambridge Platonists of the seventeenth century, of

whom we may mention Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth, and Henry More. They were all impressed by his vision of spiritual truth, which they felt could override sectarianism.

Among writers whose aim was not only or specifically religious we may mention Edmund Spenser, whose early *Hymnes* and *Faerie Queene* show Platonic influence clearly enough: two of his sonnets refer to the Platonic Ideas; and also Sir Thomas More, Addison, Berkeley, Coleridge, Shelley (who translated the *Symposium*), and Wordsworth. All of these owed a debt to Plato.

But Plato is not only great because of the influence he has had on subsequent generations. That greatness we must certainly allow him, and chiefly, perhaps, because of the part he played in the fight against mechanistic, materialist philosophies. But he is also fascinating as an outstanding figure in fourth-century Athens, and if we study him in the light of his historical background, we can watch his reactions to the society in which he lived, and to all its beliefs and assumptions that were taken for granted. We may then have some idea of the personality of the man who was probably the greatest thinker and writer of the race which has produced the greatest literature that the world has ever known.

When we come to Plato's doctrine, we shall find that he was convinced of the existence of a divine purpose or plan. The important difference between Platonism and Christianity, both of which creeds are teleological, lies in the fact that the one is a doctrine of aspiration, and the other a doctrine of inspiration. In the one, man has to strain upwards to the attainment of truth before he can lead a really good life; in the other, God's grace is said to come down to man, who merely has to be willing to receive it. Hence the one requires knowledge, while the other requires only love. But both are based on the assumption that there is a purpose

in the world. This cannot be scientifically proved, and although it may be supported with a high degree of probability, there must remain the element of faith. In an age of rationalization, Plato's spirit was sufficiently great to produce the necessary faith.

PART I

EARLY LIFE

PLATO was born³ in all probability at Ægina, an island some dozen or so miles off the coast of Attica, about May of the year 427 B.C. The name "Plato", which means "broad", was in later antiquity supposed—probably erroneously—to have been a nickname; it was attributed to the breadth of his chest and forehead, or to the breadth of his literary style. Olympiodorus speaks of many busts of Plato that would support the former theory, and the reader may care to consider the frontispiece. Otherwise, we know nothing of his personal appearance. But we know more about his family. We know that both his parents were of noble descent, and that several members of the family played a leading part in political life. We know, too, that he had two elder brothers, Adeimantus and Glaucon—both seem to have been at least fifteen years older⁴ than he—and a sister named Potone. It appears that Plato's father had gone to Ægina as a settler, but returned to Athens on the expulsion of all Athenians from the island by the Spartans, who supported its bid for independence.

Unfortunately this last piece of information, like many stories about Plato's early life that could be told, depends on the unreliable authority of an Alexandrian writer whose work is generally assigned to the third century A.D. This was a period when *litterateurs* delighted to record the merest gossip about famous men of the past. But some facts may be inferred from Plato's own dialogues, and here we are on surer ground. Ariston, Plato's father, died while

his son was still very young, probably only two or three years old, and his mother, who would be about thirty-seven at the time, married again. The stepfather, one Pyrilampes,⁵ an imperialist and diplomat, had been a close friend and ardent supporter of the statesman Pericles. From Plato's dialogue the *Charmides* (158a) we gather that he was a highly distinguished man, and that he had often served as one of his country's ambassadors, on occasion visiting in that capacity the court of the Great King of Persia. Pyrilampes had had one son by a former marriage, and Perictione bore him another, named Antiphon.⁶

A few years before Plato was born, a war had begun between Athens and Sparta that was to last until Plato was twenty-three, and end with the defeat of his country. It was a conflict that arose inevitably out of power politics, the desire of both sides to extend their influence and to increase their trade. The Peloponnesian War, as it is called, reduced Athens from a position of supremacy in Greece, from being the centre of a large empire and the cultural capital of the known world, to the status of a second-rate power. The great statesman Pericles died a year before Plato was born, and Pericles' death marks the end of the greatest period in Athens' history. During the very first years of the war, when the city was crowded with evacuees from outlying villages, there was an outbreak of plague, the effects of which were far-reaching: over one-third of the total population died. Those who survived came near to starvation through frequent invasion of Attica and devastation of the crops. Naturally enough, morale suffered, and, as always seems to happen in time of war, there was a serious decline in moral standards. The state of public morality was manifested from time to time in the vindictive cruelty meted out to rebellious subject-states, and no doubt private morality declined as well; and military repulses, privation, and want led to discontent and faction within the city. But

none of these troubles excuses the incompetence and self-seeking of those who set themselves up as their country's leaders at this critical time. However much strategical miscalculations may have contributed to Athens' defeat, there can be no doubt that political chicanery at least hastened the issue. The sanguine promises of demagogues not only prevented Athens on several occasions from making peace on favourable terms, but led to military enterprises that more level-headed statesmen opposed and deplored.

In 415 B.C., while Plato was still a boy, a large armament was sent to Sicily. Ostensibly, its purpose was to help Athens' friends against her enemies, to cut off Sparta's corn-supplies, and to strengthen Athens' influence in an island of strategic importance; but demagogy played its part, and wishful thinking prevailing over sound judgment led to one of the worst instances of mismanagement that had as yet occurred. The result, after two years' ordeal, was what Thucydides, a contemporary Athenian historian, describes as "the greatest disaster that Athens had ever suffered".⁷

Plato was now fourteen, and during the years that followed, until the war ended, he will have heard stories of disaster and distress, and witnessed a succession of régimes at Athens—alternately oligarchical and democratic—that were all corrupt and all incompetent. In May, 411 B.C., when Plato was about sixteen, the oligarchical party at Athens achieved a *coup d'état*. They set up a Council of Four Hundred. But there was strong feeling against them, the fleet came near to mutiny, and the oligarchs found it necessary to build a stronghold at the Piræus. Eventually fighting broke out, and by the end of September the oligarchs had been overthrown, and a more moderate government was installed. Leading oligarchs were executed for high treason; and during the next five or six years of "democratic terror", as it has been called, the democrats indulged freely in judicial murder and blackmail. There can be no doubt that this

period will have left Plato with no very high opinion of the potentialities of democratic government.

We have to think, then, of Plato growing to manhood in very difficult times, and as being somewhat unfortunate, perhaps, in his home life. His mother appears to have lived to a good old age; but the father was always the most important member of a Greek family, and Plato's own father, as we have seen, died while Plato was an infant. We do not know what the boy's feelings were towards his half-brother, who we are told was devoted to horse-racing, as Pyrilampes' father had been, or towards Pyrilampes himself; but the suspicion may not be unreasonable that this pillar of Periclean society may have been regarded by the young Plato as the champion of an outworn creed, almost, as we might say, "Victorian". Certainly Plato does not seem to have been unduly impressed by the merits of Pericles. It is possible, too, that being brought up by a stepfather who was no doubt much occupied with diplomatic and political affairs, and being moreover so much younger than his brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, he may have lived more in the world of his own thoughts, and developed more independence of outlook, than would otherwise have been the case. There may even have been some reaction against the theories of his stepfather. But such possibilities are merely guess-work, and we have no evidence of any ill-feeling within the family.

We have no reliable evidence about Plato's early education, but there is no reason to suppose that he did not enjoy the advantages of that carefully balanced system, comprising instruction in literature and the arts on the one hand, and physical education on the other, that formed the curriculum of every Athenian boy of good family. We may suppose, too, that between the ages of eighteen and twenty he underwent the military training that was compulsory for all Athenian youths of that period. After this he would be liable to serve in the army whenever occasion arose; but

we do not hear of his taking part in any engagement against the Spartans, and as most of the fighting during the last few years of the war was at sea, we may suppose that he was not called upon to fight at this time.

While he was still young, Plato came under the influence of a man whose personality and attitude to life made a lasting impression on his mind. This man was Socrates, of whom he remarks, when writing⁸ in his old age, "I should hardly hesitate to call him the best man alive at that time". No other person and no event ever influenced Plato's life so greatly as his association with Socrates. According to tradition Plato was twenty⁹ when he first became a follower of Socrates, but little importance need be attached to the statement. It is most unlikely that Plato had not at least met him long before that.

Socrates was forty-two years older than Plato. By calling he was a sculptor, but his importance in history lies in the revolutionary effect that he had upon the course of philosophical thought. Previous thinkers had concerned themselves with the nature of matter and of the universe as a whole; and their concentration upon the external world had culminated in the purely mechanistic theories of those who believed in nothing but atoms and void. Socrates' interest was in man, and the only important question in his view was what should be man's aim and purpose in life. He saw that most men acted as though such things as health and wealth were all that mattered, but that nevertheless the acquirement of these benefits did not bring happiness. Everyone, in fact, was agreed that happiness could only be obtained through *arete*¹⁰—the fulfilment of one's personality, of one's proper function as a human being. Yet health and wealth only satisfied some of our needs, and although they might be regarded as proximate ends, even as rewards of virtue, they could not be the ultimate end to pursue. If we gave sufficient thought to the matter, and continued long enough in

conscientious inquiry, we might hope eventually to *see* what our ultimate aim should be—what was our proper function as human beings, in the performance of which we could alone express ourselves fully and attain to true well-being. This implies, of course, a teleological view of the world: the view that there *is* some sort of purpose in life, to the accomplishment of which we can all aspire; and that if we do so, we shall be playing our proper parts in the general scheme of the universe. Moreover, Socrates held that if we once acknowledge the existence of this purpose and come to recognize its nature, then through this very knowledge, and through recognizing that by conforming ourselves to it we can benefit ourselves far more than by any other means, we should *want* to do so; and, in fact, our *wish* to pursue this end would be so strong that immediately we *should* pursue it. From such knowledge will result the possibility and the inevitability of a virtuous life: Virtue, said Socrates, is Knowledge.

Socrates was not a philosopher in the modern sense of the term. He never formulated any philosophical system, or even, so far as we can see, considered many of the implications of his own beliefs. He simply *felt in his bones*, as we might say, that happiness must depend upon "caring for the soul", and that goodness could not consist merely in conforming to convention. It is useless to pretend to have knowledge where knowledge is impossible—to pretend to know, for example, what happens to us after death; but we should care for our souls, and strive after knowledge of right conduct. Unfortunately most of us think we know what "justice" and "piety" mean; but our lapses into injustice and impiety show that at least we do not keep before us a clear vision of the true meaning of these terms, and of the value of these virtues to ourselves. Our very complacency blinds us to the truth. Socrates claimed to be guided by a Divine Sign, which had prevented him, among other things,

from entering politics; and the Delphic Oracle had declared that Socrates was the wisest of men. This Socrates interpreted as meaning that he alone was wise in that he recognized his ignorance. He therefore felt it to be his mission to look for someone wiser than himself, and to maintain the search for truth; and to induce as many others as he could, if not to help in the search, at least to become aware of their ignorance. Socrates was not a professional teacher, and claimed never to have taught anything; the one thing he knew, he said, was that he himself was ignorant. He neglected his work as a sculptor to engage in conversation with anyone he met, preferably with the young, and to discuss what he considered to be the most important of all questions, what should be the guiding principle in the conduct of our lives. He would take the "name" of some special virtue—Justice, Piety, or the like—and discuss its implications. Usually the interlocutor would in the end be reduced to confessing ignorance of its meaning; but without the intellectual honesty which such a discussion taught, few would even appreciate the need to reconsider their scale of values, and to begin the search for truth.

We can imagine how Socrates' sincerity of purpose and high moral standards would win the admiration of the young Plato, a boy, clearly, with a high degree of idealism in his make-up, at this impressionable time of life. The chief effect of his association with Socrates was to create in him, perhaps to confirm in him, the determination to base his life upon reasoned principles, and never to forsake his ideals, whatever the cost.

When the Peloponnesian War had ended with Athens' defeat, and Plato was now a man of twenty-three, a reign of terror ensued with the establishment in supreme power of thirty pro-Spartans, who came to be known as the Thirty Tyrants. Among them were Plato's uncle Critias and his mother's cousin Charmides. There were many judicial

murders, both of democrats and other citizens whose riches rather than their political leanings marked them out as victims. Critias was the most violent of the Tyrants, and he even had his more moderate colleague Theramenes put to death on a trumped-up charge. Eventually exiles and fugitives from this reign of terror collected nearby in sufficient numbers to attack the city; and in the course of the fighting that followed, Critias was killed. The Spartan king was called in to help the oligarchs, but when he arrived he arranged a peace instead. There was a general amnesty, from which only the Thirty Tyrants and their chief minions were excepted. The Spartan garrison was withdrawn, and democracy was restored.

Plato tells us that he had at first entertained hopes that the Thirty would achieve great reforms, as we know was the general expectation.¹¹ It is hardly surprising that with disillusionment should have come an intense loathing of tyranny in any form. But Plato found that the restored democrats were little better than the tyrants they replaced.

In Plato's eyes the worst of all the crimes committed by the restored democrats was undoubtedly the execution of Socrates. Socrates was accused¹² of disbelief in such gods as the state recognized, and of worshipping strange deities, in particular the Divine Sign of which he was always talking; of corrupting the young by such means as the inculcation of disrespect for parents, relations, and friends; and of incitement to despise the established constitution. But behind these charges there must have been a long-standing resentment that was the real cause of his arrest. The allegations themselves contained little truth: Socrates never flouted the traditional religion, and his Divine Sign was not a new deity at all; and so far from flouting the constitution, his extreme loyalty as a citizen made him stay in Athens to accept the penalty the law prescribed, although he had ample opportunity to leave the country and escape. There

is no evidence that he was regarded as an anti-democrat; but his questioning of all established belief, and the encouragement he gave to the young to question the traditional principles that they were taught, resulted in mistrust and resentment on the part of all who were responsible for protecting law and religion. Many, too, of those whom his questioning proved ignorant would no doubt be ready to support any charge brought against him. Again, it seems likely that harm which had been done to Athens by some of his followers, in particular Critias and Alcibiades, was well remembered, although it seems certain that this did not appear as a charge in the indictment, in view, no doubt, of the amnesty to which we have referred.

The execution of Socrates must have come as a great shock to Plato. "The best man alive", his "old friend" Socrates had died a martyr's death. He tells us himself how he now decided, for the time being at any rate, not to pursue the political career for which he had been intended. Corruption and self-seeking were far too prevalent; he would have been alone, and therefore helpless; and to engage in practical politics at all at this time would almost certainly necessitate making a compromise with his ideals, and this he was not prepared to do. We cannot do better at this point than refer the reader to Plato's own words in the *Seventh Letter*, written in his old age, in which he describes his feelings at this time.

Olympiodorus tells us¹³ that after Socrates' death Plato became a pupil of Cratylus, a disciple of Heraclitus of Ephesus. It is possible to infer from Olympiodorus that this was not the first time that Plato had attended Cratylus' classes, and Aristotle—a much more reliable witness, although writing, it is true, of a period before he was born—says that Plato was acquainted with Cratylus and his teaching from his youth.¹⁴ But whether he ever received

instruction from Cratylus himself or not, there can be little doubt that the general purport of the Heraclitean doctrine of extreme materialism was common knowledge among the educated, and readily accessible to so inquiring a mind as Plato's. The same can be said with even more certainty about the doctrines of the Pythagoreans, though it is probable that his interest in their teaching became more intense during the course of his travels, to which we now come. We will leave over until the second half of this book a more detailed discussion of the progress of Plato's thought, and the evolution of his philosophy of life. It will be sufficient to say here that his immediate intellectual problem was to reconcile Socrates' outlook, which he had so greatly admired, with certain widely accepted conclusions of recent thinkers, that seemed at first sight incompatible with it, and yet very hard to refute.

Whatever be the truth about instruction which Plato may have received from others after Socrates' death, it cannot at least have been of long duration, if we are to believe a statement in Diogenes Laertius: for he tells us that "at the age of twenty-eight, according to Hermodorus, Plato, together with some other followers of Socrates, went to Euclides at Megara".¹⁵ This must have been in 399 B.C., the year of Socrates' execution. Euclides had himself been a follower of Socrates, and was setting up a school of philosophy at Megara. The reason for this general withdrawal of Socrates' adherents is said to be "fear of the cruelty of the tyrants",¹⁶ and the trustworthiness of the story of Plato's sojourn in Megara has been questioned on the ground that the Thirty Tyrants were no longer in power.¹⁷ But the restored democrats, as we have seen, were little better in their conduct, and Diogenes might well refer to them as tyrants. Cicero in his *Republic*¹⁸ makes no mention of Megara when speaking of Plato's other travels, but he is there concerned with the influence that Plato's study of

other philosophies had upon his thought, and we need not suppose that Plato went to Megara to learn from Euclides. It is not, of course, likely that Plato's own withdrawal was due to fear; his disgust with Athenian politics, and the philosophical questions that he was anxious to resolve in his own mind, would afford ample reason for leaving Athens for a while, and for staying with friends in a nearby city.

His stay in Megara cannot have been long. We are told on the authority of Aristoxenus¹⁹ that Plato served in the army on three occasions, in the expeditions to Tanagra and to Corinth, and thirdly at Delium, where he won the prize of valour. One of these occasions may have been the battle fought at Corinth in 394 B.C. The story of these campaigns is probably true, as Aristoxenus was by no means well-disposed towards Plato, and would not give him credit for more than he could help; it is improbable, too, that Plato could have avoided military service altogether, even had he wished.

To this period must also be ascribed visits to Cyrene in Africa, to Egypt, and possibly to Phœnicia. The reason for the visit to Cyrene, according to Diogenes,²⁰ was to visit Theodorus, a mathematician. In Egypt, Plato would meet with many methods and ideas, such as the separation and subdivision of various kinds of occupation, that he seems to have incorporated in his *Republic*. And lastly, if he went to Phœnicia, he will have come into more direct contact with the thought of the Far East, with which he appears to have had some acquaintance. It is by no means impossible that he found time for these travels, in which Cicero certainly believed, if we suppose that his military service lasted for, say, a couple of years; nor is it impossible that he should have found time, during his journeyings, to write some of the early dialogues which were certainly composed before 387 B.C., and, almost as certainly, after Socrates' death. Several of Socrates' followers wrote dialogues in which the master appears holding a discussion upon some aspect of

virtue, and whether Plato was the first to write one we cannot say. But we do know that during this period Plato composed a series of such works, partly, no doubt, to vindicate the reputation of his master, and to perpetuate his fame. He was able by means of the dialogue form to represent Socrates as he really was—never dogmatic, nor yet merely destructive of established belief, but one who sought after truth, and wanted others to do the same, a “midwife” as he called himself, “of other men’s ideas”. This work would at the same time help Plato to reflect upon Socrates’ principles, and to formulate his own philosophy of life.

Plato himself tells us that he visited Italy, and describes in the *Seventh Letter* his horror at the low moral standards of the luxurious Italian Greeks. He may, indeed, have been on his way back from Africa and Egypt; but his language makes it clear that this visit, immediately preceding his crossing over to Sicily, was his first introduction to Southern Italy; if he had indeed been further south, his outward journey cannot have been by this route. The Alexandrians tell us that he went to Italy to see the Pythagorean philosophers Philolaus and Eurytus; and it is more than likely that on this occasion he met for the first time Archytas, the distinguished general, statesman, mathematician, and philosopher, who was forming a school or colony of Pythagoreans at Tarentum. Archytas became a close friend of Plato, and later on, as we shall see, he saved Plato from a very difficult situation, and very probably saved his life.

Much of the story of Plato’s subsequent activities may be read in his own *Seventh Letter*, which is now generally regarded as genuine. In 388/7 B.C. Plato, at the age of forty, crossed over to Sicily on his first visit to the island. Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse, may well have invited him. The historian Nepos says that he did, “as soon as the news reached Sicily that Plato had come to Tarentum”.²¹ The

most important outcome of this visit was the effect of Plato's personality and teaching on the young Dion, who was brother-in-law of the tyrant. The effect was profound, and went far towards determining the outlook and shaping the career of one of the most interesting characters in Sicilian history.

Dion was about twenty years old at this time, and Plato found him eager and anxious to listen to his teaching. He was impulsive by nature, and had already showed signs, as the tyrant had observed, of great ability. "It is remarkable", says Plutarch,²² "that although he had been brought up to show servility to a tyrant and had been fully trained in cringing subservience, in self-seeking flattery and in vulgar display, and in the sort of life in which pleasure and selfish gain are regarded as the chief objective, yet as soon as he had had experience of sound reasoning and of that philosophy which leads the way to true virtue, his whole heart and soul were filled with a burning enthusiasm for it"; but he goes on to say, "It is true, there was a sort of innate haughtiness in his manner, and an off-handedness that made him difficult to approach and difficult to have dealings with . . . many even of his closest friends, who admired his single-mindedness and the loftiness of his character, used to object to his treatment of his fellow-men, on the ground that he dealt with those who made requests of him more rudely and harshly than a statesman need. Plato himself, as if with a sort of insight into the future, in writing to him later on²³ urged him to guard against arrogance, which is the companion of solitude."

We know little else about this first visit to Sicily. There are stories about an interview with the tyrant, an interview at which Dionysius became very angry on hearing Plato's views about tyranny.²⁴ It is certainly more than likely that Dionysius, a keen patron of the arts, would summon so distinguished a visitor to his presence, and equally probable

that dislike would be mutual. We do not know how long Plato stayed in the island, but while it was certainly not longer than a year, it was long enough for him so to impress Dion with his teaching that he changed his whole way of life. The visit in any case seems to have come to an abrupt end, for four authorities relate that orders were given for the philosopher to be sold into slavery.²⁵ Cornelius Nepos gives no details, merely mentioning that Dionysius gave the order, and remarking that it did not deter Plato from going to Sicily again. Diodorus Siculus, quoting the incident as an example of the impulsiveness of Dionysius' temper, says that Plato was sold in the slave-market for twenty minæ for having annoyed the monarch by something he said. His philosopher friends bought him, we are told, and sent him home again. Plutarch has a slightly different version, which seems to indicate a different source—and his source may well be Timæus, a Sicilian historian who flourished at the end of the fourth century B.C. Plutarch tells us that Dion's friends had arranged for Plato to leave on a ship carrying Pollis, the Spartan envoy, to Greece, but that Dionysius "secretly urged Pollis either to murder Plato on the way, or at least to sell him as a slave . . . so Pollis took him to Ægina, and sold him there". Lastly there is Diogenes' account, which agrees largely with Plutarch's. Diogenes adds that Plato narrowly escaped death at Ægina, and that "Anniceris the Cyrenaic happened to be there and ransomed him for twenty minæ—others say the price was thirty minæ—and sent him home to his friends at Athens. They immediately refunded the money, but Anniceris refused it, saying that they were not the only people worthy of the honour of helping Plato. Others maintain that Dion sent the money, and that Anniceris, having declined to accept it, used it to buy the garden that adjoins the Academy . . . Dionysius, on hearing what had happened, wrote and asked Plato not to speak ill of him;

and Plato replied that he had too much to do to 'remember Dionysius.'"

Despite such accretions to the story as this last statement, which is obviously apocryphal, there may well be some truth behind it. But the tyrant seems not to have allowed any feelings of spite to interfere with the use he made of Dion. Dion, indeed, was a valuable minister, and seems to have represented Dionysius as ambassador on several occasions. He was sent in that capacity to Carthage, where, in view of the constant friction between Carthaginians and Siciliotes on the island, a high degree of diplomatic tact would be necessary; and he seems to have acquitted himself well. He married his niece Arete, Dionysius' daughter, who was at this time a widow. When Dionysius fell ill in 367 B.C., Dion tried to obtain the nomination of one of his own nephews (Arete's brothers) as heir to the throne. But the doctors, anxious to win favour with the heir apparent—the younger Dionysius, son of the tyrant by a former marriage—gave him no opportunity; and Plutarch relates that "according to Timæus, when the patient asked for a sleeping-draught, they gave him one that not only rendered him unconscious, but caused him to die in his sleep".²⁶ The younger Dionysius succeeded to the throne as Dionysius II.

CHAPTER II

THE ACADEMY, AND THE FIRST VISIT TO DIONYSIUS II

MEANWHILE, some twenty years before, after his first visit to Sicily, Plato had returned to Athens, and there, probably in 386 B.C., he founded the Academy. The Academy may be called the first university that ever was. There had been in the past teachers of rhetoric and of other useful arts; more recently, there had been organized schools of rhetoric. But there had never been any institution that claimed to train men for public life by helping them to study abstract truth. This is not to say that Plato was a theorist whose theories bore no relation to practice: he believed, as no doubt Socrates had believed, that oratorical skill was of no value unless the orator used it for a good purpose, and to be able to decide what purposes were ultimately good, the aspiring politician must be trained in the pursuit of truth. Chesterton once described someone as being "theoretically a practical man, but practically more impractical than any theorist"; and Plato, too, believed that all practice must be based on sound theory—or, as he would have put it, on knowledge of right and wrong.

We are apt to regard such knowledge as innate, or as acquired by experience and instruction handed on from generation to generation. We have to remember that in Plato's time there was no generally accepted code of behaviour prescribed by divine revelation. Indeed the traditional religion as a whole had been subjected to much critical questioning in the latter part of the fifth century, and the views of the educated on

matters of religion and morality must have been by now very various. Plato had pondered deeply and studied all the current philosophies, and was well on the way at this time to formulating his own beliefs, of which we shall treat in Part II: and the basis of this philosophy was the conviction that Socrates had held, that there is a purpose in the world, that man should try to discover the nature of this purpose and of his own relationship to it, and that once he discovered it he would *want* to lead his life in conformity with it. This purpose, or ultimate and permanent truth, Plato believed to be the only sure guide to action; and the curriculum of the aspiring statesman should be planned with this in mind.

Hence education at the Academy consisted largely in the study of the sciences. Lectures may have been given, but most of the work was probably of the nature of discussion and research. The choice of a scientific syllabus would have, in Plato's view, three main advantages: it encouraged the study of factual truth, whereas literature and the arts were largely concerned with the senses and with emotion; the subjects with which the sciences dealt—the truths of geometry, for example, and the motions of the stars—were indications of the perfection of the ultimate truth that governs the scheme of the universe; and the correlation of knowledge obtained from such study would form the starting-point for the great inquiry into the nature of this ultimate reality. This final stage in the pursuit of truth was carried out, so far as intellect alone could go, by means of a process that Plato called *Dialectic*. With this we shall deal more thoroughly later on; here it will suffice to say that it was an attempt by means of intellectual argument to obtain some comprehension of the principle underlying the scheme of things, the Good, as Plato called it, in the light of which everything here on earth would come to have meaning, and to be seen in its proper perspective.

No doubt only a few of the students at the Academy

would reach a very advanced stage in these studies, but training in the study of abstract truth could not fail to improve the qualifications of any statesman or prince, provided that he had some natural inclination for the pursuit. This is hardly the place to discuss what at first sight appears to be a curious disregard of the truths to be derived from great literature and art. But we may remark that Plato was certainly not blind to artistic beauty, and that in the *Symposium* we have an account of the æsthetic approach to the Good, an approach which is complementary, as it were, or parallel, to the intellectual approach described above.

Young men of high birth who were preparing to take a leading part in the government of their native cities came to the Academy from all over Greece. Membership of the Academy undoubtedly carried with it a certain amount of prestige, and Plutarch tells us²⁷ of some members who were invited to draw up codes of law for various cities: Phormio for Elis, Menedemus for Pyrrha, Eudoxus for Cnidus, and Aristotle for Stagira. Euphræus of Oreus, who afterwards lived at the court of King Perdiccas III of Macedon, seems to have enjoyed a position of great influence in that country;²⁸ Delius of Ephesus was a trusted adviser of both Philip and Alexander of Macedon; another of Philip's advisers was Plato's pupil, Pythe, and Aristotle was tutor to the young Alexander. Hermeias of Atarneus, though never himself a student at the Academy, ruled his country on academic principles, aided by the advice of Aristotle and Xenocrates, who became his intimate friends; and Aristotle, in fact, married Pythias, who seems to have been either Hermeias' daughter or his niece. Of Athenians educated at the Academy, Demosthenes was perhaps the most distinguished for his subsequent career.

From this information alone we can see how renowned the Academy must have become in the first decades of its existence. It lasted, in fact, for some nine hundred years,

until the Emperor Justinian ordered the closing of all schools of philosophy at Athens in A.D. 529. The Academy provided Plato with an opportunity, if he could not himself realize his political ideals at Athens, of inculcating in the minds of others the love of philosophy, of "writing the truth in the soul of the learner"²⁹ by means of the personal intercourse which he held to be necessary to true education. He did not claim to be able to parcel-out knowledge ready-made, as it were, as the Sophists thought that they could; such understanding could only result from the efforts of the pupil, and the teacher could only guide. But the teacher could help; and possibly one day there might be created in some one pupil destined to bear rule that union of wisdom and of power which Plato believed could alone bring peace and happiness to any land.

Plato believed that written treatises are of little value, as he explains himself in the *Seventh Letter*. The fundamental truths of philosophy cannot be expressed in words, and a book has the added disadvantage that it cannot answer questions. In the *Phædrus*³⁰ he declares that written work is only useful as an aid to the memory of one who already has knowledge. It is certain that he regarded his own writings as of little value, although he may have felt that putting them into dialogue form would encourage dialectic. By the time of the founding of the Academy he had already advanced in his philosophical progress some considerable way beyond Socrates' position, and in the dialogues written from this time onwards, after the first announcement of the Theory of Ideas and of the Immortality of the Soul in the *Symposium* and the *Phædo*, we have a systematic elaboration and consolidation of his creed that centres round these two main tenets. We must regard the composition of the dialogues, including the *Republic*, most of which was probably written at the time, as a spare-time hobby to which the writer attributed very little importance.

We may conveniently make some mention here of Isocrates. Isocrates was the chief teacher of rhetoric in Athens; he had opened a school some four years before the foundation of the Academy. He seems to have started life as a writer of speeches for use in the law-courts, but he abandoned this occupation, and from the time when he founded his school at the age of forty-four until his death at the age of ninety-eight he was composing speeches of a political nature, and teaching others to write them. His purpose was to inspire his countrymen with high ideals, the upholding of Hellenism against barbarism, and the unification of all Greece under the leadership of Athens. "I believe", he said, "that the study of political discourse can help more than anything else to mould and educate character."³¹ And again, "I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to reach more often than not the best conclusions, and I consider to be a philosopher the man who concerns himself with those studies from which he will most readily acquire that sort of intuition".³² All this was of course very much at variance with Plato's views on the importance of real knowledge.

The fundamental difference in their conceptions of philosophy and education led to a rivalry between the two schools, and Plato and Isocrates seem to have taken every opportunity of hinting or writing openly in detraction of each other's methods. The *Protagoras* seems to contain a hit at Isocrates as a teacher of the politician's art who lacked the requisite knowledge, and the introduction to the *Helen* is probably Isocrates' counter-blow. The *Gorgias* was bound to be taken by Athenian readers, and must have been meant, as to some extent a condemnation of Isocrates' school; it contains parody of at least one passage of Isocrates' speech *Against the Sophists*, which was written as a sort of prospectus of Isocrates' school in 390 B.C. But perhaps the most striking attack is contained in the *Phædrus*. It has been claimed that

this work, written somewhere between 372 and 368 B.C., "must be considered primarily as a direct and comprehensive attack on the educational system of Isocrates";³³ It criticizes at length his method of composing discourses, and his belief that they were valuable in the training of the young. Plato deplored Isocrates' failure to regard true knowledge of right and wrong as the aim of education, and as the prerequisite of the statesman's and orator's career; and in any case the writing of discourses was in his eyes, for reasons which we have seen, no better than a pastime.

In 367 B.C., when Plato was now sixty years old and had been for some twenty years teaching at the Academy, he received an invitation from Dion to come again to Sicily. Dion's suggestion was that Plato should try, by means of advice and instruction, to bring his influence to bear upon the new young king, Dionysius II, who, it will be remembered, had this very year succeeded to the throne. Dion was well aware of the profound effect that Plato's personality had had upon himself and upon some few others with whom he had come into close contact on his previous visit, and he hoped that if Plato could be prevailed upon to come again, some similar transformation might result in the new tyrant. He would be aware, no doubt, of Plato's conviction that if wisdom could be united to supreme power, happiness must result for the country under that ruler's control. Exactly how much Dion imagined could be accomplished with the young Dionysius we cannot say. He must have recognized that Dionysius had, as we shall see, many shortcomings, and that he was very far from being a suitable subject for any teacher to work upon; but as Dionysius' father had kept his son in close seclusion from public life, and indeed from all social activity, it is possible that he did not know the full extent of these handicaps. No doubt his great admiration for Plato would lead him to hope for what his judgment might perceive to be almost impossible.

We can readily imagine Plato's hesitation and reluctance, described in the *Seventh Letter*, to accept such an invitation. At the age of sixty, after so many years' work at the Academy, we can understand that he would be loath to leave the occupations to which he had become so accustomed, and in which his heart-felt interest lay, and to betake himself to a tyrant's court as teacher and political adviser—especially when his pupil, probably an unwilling pupil, was to be the son of Dionysius I. Despite his beliefs about a union of wisdom and power, the prospect on this occasion would not be attractive. But so as not to disappoint Dion, and so as not to appear unwilling, however unfavourable the circumstances, to try out his theories in practice, he accepted the invitation, and set out for Sicily once more.

Plato describes this visit to Dionysius II in his *Seventh Letter*.³⁴ We will here summarize the main events, supplementing the narrative by some information drawn from other sources, and the reader can at his leisure read Plato's own account.

It is important to bear in mind that Plato can hardly have hoped, at least after the first few days at the court, to turn Dionysius into a perfect philosopher-king, the ideal ruler described in the *Republic*, who could by his wisdom bring perfect peace and happiness to his people.³⁵ The attainment of such wisdom required long and arduous study, and Dionysius, who was now twenty-eight, was probably too old to undergo the whole of such a course. Whether or not the appropriate programme of education set forth in *Republic* VII was written before or after his experience with this tyrant, Plato had given some indication of the curriculum he thought suitable for those in authority by the syllabus he employed at the Academy. There his students came at a much earlier age; and Dionysius had been denied even the rudiments of elementary education. Plutarch records that the elder Dionysius, who was extremely suspicious by nature,

was afraid to let his son be educated or come into contact with any of the leading citizens. He was afraid that he might plot against his father and rob him of the throne. For this reason he kept the boy closely guarded at home, "where, through lack of the company of others, and ignorance of public life, he used to make little model wagons and lamp-stands and wooden chairs and tables."³⁶ His character, too, had not been properly trained; we are told that certain courtiers, presumably to ingratiate themselves with the young king, set themselves out to initiate him into every form of licence and debauchery, and their endeavours appear to have met with no opposition. On the other hand, the training of a philosopher-king as described in the *Republic* presupposed the existence of suitable qualities of character and temperament.

It is most unlikely, then, that Plato ever intended to try to make of Dionysius a ruler capable of just and prudent exercise of absolute power. It is true that in the *Seventh Letter* Plato regrets that an opportunity of uniting in one man political influence and love of philosophy has come to naught, but this combination is also prescribed for the limited monarchy described in the *Laws* as a second-best polity. Something might be achieved, but that as a king Dionysius could never be brought near to perfection must have been obvious from the first. Plato may have hoped to induce the tyrant to accept a limited constitution; or, at least, so to mould or reform his character that his example would introduce somewhat higher moral standards among the people. Plato was a great believer in the influence of example, especially where the exemplar was the ruler of a state. Again, when he had been improved in this way Dionysius would probably use better judgment and discretion in the introduction of social and political reforms, which we gather from the *Third Letter* (which is probably genuine) he had already agreed to make. It appears from this letter that

Plato advised Dionysius to postpone these reforms until the course of instruction was completed.

Diogenes tells us, for what his testimony may be worth, that Plato was accompanied on this visit by Xenocrates, a colleague of his at the Academy who later succeeded him as president of the school.³⁷ He reached Syracuse probably in the early autumn of 367 B.C., and found there many intrigues on foot against Dion. It appears that Dionysius mistrusted Dion as a result of Dion's attempt, to which we have referred above, to obtain the succession to the tyranny of one or other of his nephews; but the young Dionysius could not help, nevertheless, admiring the ability and character of his minister. Many courtiers who were jealous of Dion's influence were doing their best to persuade the tyrant that Dion was plotting against him and aiming at transferring the tyranny to these nephews, and Dion's severe manner and haughty bearing were put forward as an indication of his disapproval of the rest of the court, and of the likelihood of his becoming dangerous. When it became clear that Dionysius, on Dion's advice, wanted to invite Plato to Syracuse, and that he intended to persist in the project, they had cleverly suggested to him that he should recall one Philistus, a historian and politician who had been exiled by the elder Dionysius, but still remained a strong supporter of the tyranny. They appear to have had some apprehension that Plato's arrival might strengthen Dion's hand, and possibly even lead to a change of government. They were therefore anxious to have Philistus back at court, to counterbalance Plato's influence with the king.

Plato was given on his arrival a most magnificent reception. "A royal chariot," says Plutarch,³⁸ "magnificently equipped, awaited him as he stepped ashore, and the tyrant offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the great blessing that had been granted him during his reign . . . and the citizens had high hopes of the reformation of the tyrant. Everyone

became wildly eager to take up philosophy, and the palace was filled with sand, so great was the number of geometricians there." Geometry, then, was probably one of the subjects in which Plato gave Dionysius some instruction, and the composing of essays on law was probably another; for we read in the *Third Letter* that Plato himself spent some time writing preambles to laws, and also that he considered such work, even if the laws were never intended to be placed in the statute-book, good practice for the young.³⁹ A preamble would explain the purpose of a law, and the composition of such a document would help to clarify the pupil's mind about the ultimate object of all legislation. What else Plato taught Dionysius we do not know, but no doubt he thought that a general course of elementary education would not only improve his mind and to some extent make up for the omissions of the past, but also keep him from licentious pursuits and give him a sounder judgment: this might help to reform his character, which, as he did not hesitate to impress upon the king, was the chief aim of his endeavour. Such reformation was certainly necessary, for Dionysius had been led seriously astray by some of his courtiers; Plutarch tells us that he once kept up a drinking-bout for ninety consecutive days, refusing to be interrupted by any matter of state for the whole of the period.⁴⁰ The highest reaches of philosophy could only be approached in easy stages by the best of men, and one whose education had been so shamefully neglected would have to be treated by slow and systematic methods.

Dion's enemies, now that Philistus had been recalled, renewed their accusations that Dion was plotting against the tyrant. Plutarch⁴¹ seems to consider that these charges were not entirely without foundation; "it seems likely", he says, "that Dion hoped through Plato's visit . . . to turn Dionysius into a constitutional ruler . . . but if Dionysius should prove stubborn, he had decided to depose

him and to restore the government to the people of Syracuse." Plutarch⁴² also tells us of a letter written by Dion to some Carthaginian envoys, which was intercepted. The letter urged them not to negotiate for peace without his being present, as he could effect a lasting settlement. Dionysius consulted with Philistus, and deciding that the letter suggested treason he had Dion hustled on to a small boat and deported forthwith.

Plato tells us that there was a rumour that he himself had been executed, as the cause of all the trouble. But in fact Dion's exile resulted in so much public resentment that Dionysius became alarmed, and so far from putting Plato to death actually conceded that Dion should enjoy the revenues of his estate, which for a few months were sent to him in Greece. Dionysius, moreover, had a lurking apprehension that Dion might stir up trouble for him, and was anxious not to goad him too far.

Plato was brought within the gates of the acropolis, where he was given a guard of honour, ostensibly out of Dionysius' kindly concern for his guest, but in reality because Plato's departure at that time would make it appear that the philosopher had little regard for Dionysius. The tyrant may also have feared that Plato might bear witness in Greece to his ill-treatment of Dion. Plato, then, was virtually a prisoner. As time passed, intercourse with Plato gave Dionysius a genuine admiration for him, and he became jealously anxious that Plato should return these feelings, and think more of him than of Dion, but he would not listen to Plato's teaching, for fear of the warnings given him by Dion's enemies. It seems that Dionysius inherited something of his father's suspicious nature. Only the outbreak of further war, probably with the Carthaginians, made the tyrant agree to Plato's departure. He then assured him that he would invite him again at the conclusion of the war, and promised to recall Dion at the same time. But this promise, as we shall see, he broke.

Dion, when banished from Syracuse, had made for Athens, and there he became a member of the Academy.⁴³ We can imagine what a relief and what a pleasure it must have been to Plato to be teaching at the Academy once more, especially as Dion, his best and favourite pupil, was now there.

THE THIRD VISIT TO SYRACUSE

WE have hardly any evidence of what happened to Plato during the interval between his two visits to the court of the younger Dionysius: the visit, that is, which has just been discussed, and another that he was to make a few years later. He presumably settled down again to his work as president of the Academy. Several important dialogues that must be attributed to this period contain detailed elaboration of his earlier theories, with developments intended to meet his own criticism as well as that of others. He was still convinced that only conformity to some such system could give meaning and value to life.

Of the letters attributed to Plato, while the *Seventh* and *Eighth* are now generally regarded as genuine, the authenticity of some of the others is still hotly debated.⁴⁴ One of these is the *Thirteenth*, which, if genuine, must have been written about 365 B.C. This purports to be a letter from Plato to Dionysius, and mentions presents that are being sent for the tyrant and his family. It introduces to the tyrant an astronomer named Helicon, and urges the continuance of philosophical studies at court; and it discusses Dionysius' financial arrangements to meet expenditure on his behalf at Athens. It appears, too, that Dionysius wanted to arrange for Dion's wife to become the wife of one Timocrates, doubtless for political reasons, and that the tyrant had asked Plato to find out discreetly how Dion would react to a suggestion of divorce. The answer is that there is little likelihood of Dion's agreeing to such a step.

Whether the letter is genuine or not, we know that Dionysius did in fact transfer Arete to Timocrates, without Dion's consent, a few years later.⁴⁵

We can add little to Plato's own full account of his last visit to Sicily. Our only authority is Plutarch, and he and Timæus, on whom he draws, almost certainly rely here to a large extent on the *Seventh Letter*. Diodorus has little to say of Dionysius II's reign, and Nepos has no need to record this visit in his short biography of Dion, who was in exile at the time.

Some time during the summer of 362 B.C. Dionysius, who wanted to impress the philosophers at his court with his learning, and regretted that he had not taken advantage of the opportunity he had had of acquiring knowledge from Plato, invited him to come again. The war that had engaged his attention was now over; but instead of recalling Dion as he had promised, he asked that this might be put off for one more year. Plato was not convinced by the assurances that were made of Dionysius' change of heart, and replied that as the agreement about Dion's recall had not been adhered to, and as he himself was now an old man—he was sixty-five or so at the time—he could not come. Dionysius, afraid that Plato's refusal might affect his own prestige, sent another invitation the following year. As bearer of it he sent one of Archytas' friends, Archedemus by name, of whom he knew that Plato thought highly; and he supported his request by making it clear that if Plato did not come, he would never recall Dion at all. Plato was anxious not to be disloyal to Dion, everyone in Athens and in Sicily, not to mention Archytas and Dion himself, kept urging him to go, and he could not deny the possibility that Dionysius was really eager to try again; and accordingly, probably early in April of 361 B.C., he set out for Syracuse once more. He was accompanied⁴⁶ this time by his nephew Speusippus, who

had formed a friendship with Dion during Dion's stay at Athens.

Plato greatly pleased the tyrant by coming, and was granted the special privilege of coming into his presence without being searched; and he was offered many presents of money, which we are told that he would not accept. As soon as he arrived Plato decided to give Dionysius a test, to see whether he was really capable and anxious to pursue philosophy; but the result showed that he had no ability to undertake the necessary studies, and it was clear that any further instruction would be wasted upon him. Plato would probably have left at once, but again pressure was brought to bear to prevent his departure.

Dionysius, actuated, according to Plutarch, by fear of Dion's popularity in Greece, where his character and his wealth alike made him a man of note, suddenly declared that Dion's property was no longer his, but must be considered to belong to his son, Dionysius' nephew, who, if his father was now to be regarded as legally an outlaw, would become the tyrant's ward. This made Plato all the more anxious to leave at once, but Dionysius, not wanting him to report his malpractices in Greece, persuaded him to stay by the promise that the following summer he could take Dion's fortune with him to Greece, on condition that it should be held in trust by Plato's and Dion's friends. As Dion's wealth was considerable, and he did not want Dion to think that he had failed him, Plato agreed to stay: Dionysius might prevent him from leaving again at the end of the year, but at least he would have done his best for Dion. He asked that Dion should be informed of the arrangement. But soon afterwards Dionysius declared his intention of selling Dion's property, and keeping half for Dion's son; and he followed this up by appropriating all the proceeds of the sale to himself.

After a mutiny by some of Dionysius' mercenaries,

occasioned by an attempt to lower their pay, Dionysius removed Plato from his lodging in the palace garden and made him live outside the acropolis, in the house of Archemus. Here he was exposed to danger from the mercenaries, for although Plato had, in fact, tried to secure just treatment for Heraclides, who was held responsible for the mutiny, the mercenaries knew nothing of this; all they knew was that if Plato had his way and a constitutional government were formed, they would probably be disbanded, and they were in consequence eager to kill him. In this predicament Plato wrote to his friend Archytas. Archytas used his influence with Dionysius, and the tyrant, who was anxious to preserve his important alliance with Tarentum, was finally prevailed upon to agree to let Plato go. This would be in the spring or early summer of 360 B.C.

CHAPTER IV

LAST YEARS

IN August of the same year, 360 B.C., Plato met Dion at the Olympic Games. Dion, who had hitherto endured Dionysius' treatment of him with considerable forbearance, had now been made very bitter by the news that the tyrant had given his wife Arete in marriage to Timocrates, and such was his exasperation that he asked Plato to join him in an expedition of vengeance. But Plato refused; it had always been his belief that it was better to suffer wrong than to do it, and that to take vengeance was a mistake. No doubt he would have agreed that Dion had every right to recover his wife, if he could, by more peaceful means; but so long as Dion was bent on bloodshed and revenge, he must call others to his aid.

It is probably a mistake⁴⁷ to suppose that after his last visit to Dionysius Plato entertained feelings of real hostility towards the tyrant, or that the tyrant had any such feelings towards him. It is true that Plutarch speaks of ill-will at the time of Plato's departure, but this is probably a groundless assumption: the *Seventh Letter*, our best evidence, affords no indication of open enmity. On the contrary, we find Plato always anxious to give Dionysius his due, and to allow that although he may have believed the rumours that Plato was plotting with Dion to rob him of his power, he had nevertheless spared his life. If the *Second Letter* is genuine, we have proof that Plato was still prepared to have dealings with the tyrant in 360/359 B.C. "I hear from Archedemus", he writes,⁴⁸ "that you consider that not

only I, but my friends too, should refrain from acting or speaking against you. Dion you do not include in this. Now your making an exception of Dion suggests that I have no influence over my friends; and indeed if I had any influence over them, and especially over you and over Dion, then all of us, and the rest of Greece besides, would be, in my opinion, in a far happier state." "And over Dion" seems to refer to the expedition that it was probably already clear Dion really intended to make—much, no doubt, to Plato's regret. Plato goes on to say that he has heard nothing of the unkind talk about the tyrant that had apparently been reported; and in answer to Dionysius' question about the relationship to subsist between them in future, he gives an assurance that if Dionysius will show some respect for him, he will reciprocate. Archdemus, the bearer of the tyrant's message, has brought questions about Plato's philosophy, and about problems on which Dionysius has been engaged. To the deep question about the essence of his philosophy, Plato can only give a "riddling" reply in writing, but Archdemus can convey oral instruction on his behalf. The letter seems to suit the situation and the characters of the correspondents, and may well be authentic. The test which Dionysius had been given had shown that he could never become a truly philosophical ruler, but now that Plato was home again the philosopher may have seen no reason to begrudge the tyrant some little information that it would be no trouble to give. In any case, whether the letter is genuine or not, there is no need to assume any deep resentment on Plato's part at the treatment he had received.

Dion meanwhile⁴⁹ had been collecting mercenaries for an invasion of Sicily, with the help, amongst others, of Heraclides, whom we have mentioned before as the suspected ringleader of a mutiny against Dionysius. In August, 357 B.C., Dion sailed from Zacynthus with fifteen hundred men, leaving Heraclides to follow with a similar force, and

evading the fleet of Philistus, who was now Dionysius' admiral, he landed at Heraclea Minea.

During Plato's last visit to the island, Speusippus, who had accompanied him, had sounded the citizens of Syracuse, and had found that they longed to be delivered of their tyrant. Certainly Dionysius was not popular in the rest of Sicily, and men of every race joined Dion in his march on Syracuse. Dionysius was away at the time, and although he hurried back, he found that the mercenaries had deserted the heights guarding the city, and that Dion had been able to enter Syracuse amid great rejoicings on the part of the inhabitants. The tyrant ensconced himself in his isthmus-fortress of Ortygia, and Dion built a siege-wall across the neck of the isthmus. After an unsuccessful attempt to capture this wall by a trick, and having failed to induce Dion to come to a private agreement, he used all kinds of stratagems to undermine Dion's popularity. He sent a letter that purported to come from Dion's son, reminding the deliverer of his former support of the tyranny, and urging him to become tyrant himself. Dion, anxious to take the people into his confidence, and ignorant of the contents of the letter, had it read out in public. The letter, and other similar devices employed by Dionysius, had the desired effect of rendering Dion's intentions highly suspect.

The *Third Letter* attributed to Plato will, if genuine, be a political pamphlet intended to counteract some of Dionysius' propaganda, and thereby to help the loyalists of the Dionean party. It is an open letter answering Dionysius' accusation that Plato had prevented him from carrying out reforms, and that the programme which Dion announced had originally been his. This, Dionysius had claimed, was in line with Dion's plan to usurp the tyranny.

Heraclides now arrived with Dion's reinforcements.⁵¹ He, it seems, had quarrelled with Dion in the Peloponnese, and had decided to make a private attack of his own on the tyrant,

and to court the favour of the Syracusan people himself, encouraging disloyalty to Dion. He defeated Philistus' fleet, and Dionysius offered to surrender on condition of being allowed to go free to Italy, receiving still the income of his estate. This condition was refused, but the tyrant managed to escape with a few friends to Locri, leaving his son Apollocrates in command of Ortygia. Heraclides, to avoid the penalty of his negligence in letting the tyrant escape, encouraged the extreme democrats to carry radical measures in the Assembly, to stop the pay of Dion's mercenaries, and to appoint new generals in place of Dion and his friends. Dion had to retreat with his mercenaries to Leontini, after the Syracusans had unsuccessfully attempted to make his mercenaries desert.

Shortly after this Dionysius sent some troops from Locri under a Campanian named Nypsius, and so great was the havoc that these barbarians wrought that the Syracusans had to beg Dion to return and save them. Heraclides was pardoned, but continued his intrigues against Dion. On one occasion Heraclides was only just prevented from sailing on Syracuse and setting up for tyranny himself. Even so, Dion was still ready to effect a reconciliation.

Apollocrates, through lack of supplies, was now forced to surrender the citadel, and sailed away to Italy. Dion was thus united once more with his wife and little son, who had been prisoners in the citadel. Despite his success, Dion lived "simply and without extravagance",⁵⁰ but unfortunately he "was obstinate in not relaxing the haughtiness of his manner and his unbending severity in dealing with the people, although the situation called for a more friendly attitude, and although Plato reproved him and wrote⁵¹ to warn him that arrogance is the companion of solitude". Plutarch's reference here is to another of the letters attributed to Plato, and this one, the *Fourth*, will, if genuine, have been written about this time. In it Plato urges Dion to exercise more

tolerance and conciliatoriness in his dealings with others, "as the eyes of the world are upon him".

Heraclides now became more open in his opposition to Dion, especially when Dion sent to Corinth, the mother-city of Syracuse, for assistance in drawing up a new constitution. Seeing that Heraclides would hinder him in giving effect to his designs, Dion gave way to those who recommended that he should be killed, and Heraclides was murdered at his home. Dion managed to allay the resentment which Heraclides' death at first aroused among the people; but an Athenian named Callippus, a friend of Dion who had taken part in his expedition, seeing that Dion had enemies, and that he himself was popular with the Syracusans, organized a conspiracy, "in the full expectation that he would win Sicily as a reward for murdering his friend".⁵² Dion was murdered at his home by two hired Zacynthians, probably about the end of June, in 354 B.C. Dion's wife and sister were imprisoned, and while in prison his wife gave birth to a son. Callippus now had Syracuse under his control, and remained in power for thirteen months. It seems that soon after Dion's death, "those who had helped him to free Syracuse were divided among themselves".⁵³ Undoubtedly their position was a difficult one: Dion, their leader, was dead, and many of his original supporters may even have come to doubt his integrity after Dionysius' propaganda and the harsh severity that Dion had lately shown. It is more than likely that many members of the Dionean party now regarded Plato as ultimately responsible for their present difficult situation, and wished that Dionysius, the rightful monarch, could be restored to power. Such a reaction need cause little surprise: Dionysius had in many ways proved his goodwill, by remitting taxes and pardoning political offenders,⁵⁴ whereas Dion had shown himself a far less benevolent autocrat. Dionysius was the son of their champion against Carthaginian encroachment, whereas Dion's

career had led to nothing but usurpation of power by a self-seeking foreigner. Alarm and anxiety caused by Callippus' usurpation led to an unbalanced judgment of Dion's methods, and to indignant criticism of Plato, who, it was felt, had led Dion astray; and Callippus, too, had himself been a member of the Academy.⁵⁵

In these circumstances it seems that some more moderate members of the Dionean party wrote to Plato, perhaps out of desperation, asking for advice. Plato's reply is the *Seventh Letter*. What sort of help had been expected, we cannot say; but the only advice that Plato gives, and indeed the only advice that could have been given, was that *reconciliation* must be achieved, between all groups and parties, as soon as possible, so that peace may give opportunity for reconstruction and reform. There then follows an outline of the more pressing reforms that Plato would recommend should be carried out once peace has been achieved. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this letter is the way in which Plato makes this outline of suggested reform coincide with an *apologia* of the part that he had played in Sicilian affairs; and this was no doubt intended to help the reconciliation that he was anxious to promote. But this is an open letter, and was no doubt meant to answer criticism at Athens as well as in Sicily; at Athens there will have been many who mistrusted the motives of one who took no part in Athenian politics, and yet visited the rich and luxurious Syracusan court, ostensibly to give advice. Dionysius' apparent rejection of Plato will have aroused much sarcastic criticism, and even more will have resulted from Dion's adventurous career. One of Plato's chief concerns, then, is to exonerate true philosophy, and this had to be done before Athenians and Sicilians alike; but the exoneration of Dion was of particular importance for Syracuse, as a means of remedying the split that had occurred among Dion's partisans. Hence Plato several times insists that the policy which he is now

advocating is the same as that which he had urged upon Dion and upon Dionysius. This extremely clever and interesting letter is now generally accepted as genuine, and a translation will be found at the end of the book.

Plato's letter, did not, however, prevent civil war in Syracuse. The Dionean party soon found it necessary to withdraw to Leontini; and from there they made an attack upon Syracuse, apparently by sea as well as by land, under the leadership of one of Dion's nephews, Hipparinus by name, half-brother of Dionysius II. Plato's *Eighth Letter*, which like the *Seventh* is generally acknowledged to be authentic, must be assigned to some time shortly before the conclusion of this struggle.

How far Plato had succeeded in restoring cohesion within the Dionean party we cannot say, but it would appear that there were still several rival factions at Syracuse and in the rest of Sicily, and it is probable that there were still many divisions within the ranks of Dion's former partisans. The champions of tyranny and the champions of freedom are engaged in continuous fighting, and the campaign against Callippus was not the only struggle. Battles have been fought all over the island. In one passage of the *Eighth Letter*⁵⁶ Dionysius is referred to as the leader of the enemy, and it is possible that he may have returned in person at the head of an invading army. If so, he probably found a number of adherents among reactionaries in the island. It is quite possible, too, that Hipparinus had among his followers some strong supporters who wanted him to assume tyrannical power, which, as we shall see, he ultimately did; and there may, again, have been those who favoured the appointment as tyrant of Dion's own son. The existence of some such rival groups may be inferred from Plato's letter, and doubtless clashes between these factions were constantly occurring simultaneously with the main struggle against Callippus. In these circumstances Plato, whose

earlier explanations had failed to secure peace, made a further attempt to mediate, this time by means of practical proposals for a compromise.

Plato recommends the appointment of three kings—Dionysius, Hipparinus, and Dion's son. He would, however, limit the powers of the kingship, not only by sharing them among three colleagues with equal authority, but by instituting also Law Wardens, a Council, and a Popular Assembly, which bodies would between them exercise most of the legislative and administrative functions of government; the kings would be left with little more than the priestly duties and privileges of the King Archon at Athens. This constitution bears many resemblances to the one described in the *Laws*, and contains several features of the Cretan, Syracusan, and Athenian constitutions. There would be a strong element of democracy in the mixture, but to prevent a "democratic terror" such as Plato had experienced at Athens, experts are to be appointed to dispense justice at least in the highest court, instead of juries chosen by lot. Lastly, as in the *Seventh Letter*, Plato urges the resettlement of those cities which had either been devastated in war or depopulated through the machinations of successive tyrants of the past: only in this way could effective precaution be taken against the very real danger of Greek civilization in the island being drowned by a flood of barbarism, as the Carthaginians encroached steadily further and gained increasingly wide dominion. All these suggestions are dramatically represented as the policy that Dion would recommend if he were still alive.

The recommendation of a compromise was a statesmanlike suggestion, but bitterness and self-seeking had grown too strong to admit of any such agreement. Hipparinus captured Syracuse, and at once established himself as tyrant. His reign seems to have been little better than the tyrannies of the past, and he died two years later, probably in 351 B.C.,

in a drunken brawl. He was succeeded as tyrant by his brother Nysæus, who reigned until 346 B.C., and we can see from Plutarch's description of Sicily at that time that Plato's apprehensions had been fully justified: "Owing to its numerous troubles Syracuse was almost wholly deserted; as for the rest of Sicily, part of it had already been razed to the ground and depopulated during the wars, and most of the cities to which this had happened were now occupied by barbarians of various races, and by unemployed mercenaries, who readily supported each new tyrant in turn."⁵⁷ Dionysius now returned from Locri and recovered Syracuse, but his rule was such that the Syracusans appealed to their parent-city of Corinth (for Syracuse had originally been established as a colony by settlers from Corinth), and the Corinthians sent Timoleon with an army to re-establish order in Sicily. Dionysius was sent to Corinth, where the story of the last part of his life affords further evidence, if further evidence be needed, of the impossibility of his ever being transformed into a true philosopher-king. "Thinking it safest to humble himself, he sank to the meanest possible mode of existence. Not content with lounging about in public, he drank in public; not content with being seen in cook-shops and brothels, he would sit in them for a whole day at a time, wrangling with the lowest of the low about trivial affairs. He preferred that he should be a laughing-stock . . . that those who feared might see him, and those who did not fear, the more readily despise."⁵⁸

Plato died in 347 B.C., at the age of eighty. His last years must have brought him much disappointment, although he was undoubtedly enough of a statesman to appreciate the trend of events. The *Seventh Letter* shows clearly the intensity of his grief at Dion's death. He had done his best for Syracuse, but even Hipparinus, of whom he had had high hopes in the belief that he was "setting his country free",

had proved himself a worthless character. What Plato could probably not foresee was the extent of the influence that his teaching would have on so many generations to come.

It is true, if we are to believe the evidence of some of the letters whose authenticity has been questioned, that Plato was not altogether unconcerned about the opinion that posterity would form of his own achievements. But much of what might be taken for conceit is in reality concern for the reputation of true philosophy, in which Plato saw the only hope of man's salvation. He had a sense of the dignity of his position as a teacher, but his chief demand is that due recognition be accorded to the importance of his creed, and to himself not as a man, but as the apostle of true philosophy. If the evidence of these letters is to be accepted, we have evidence also of much that must go to his credit. Dion, at the height of his military fame, is told that "the greatest struggle"—that of proving himself truthful and generous and just—is still to come;⁵⁹ even Archytas is given gentle reproof with the reminder that "we are not born into this world for ourselves alone, but our country, our parents, our friends, and the circumstances in which our lives are set, make many calls upon us".⁶⁰ The fact that these leaders of their countries, and Hermeias of Atarneus and Perdiccas of Macedon too, were prepared to be treated by Plato on almost intimate terms, will testify to the strength of his character. Yet although he had the respect of kings, it seems from these letters—which, even if not authentic, are by no means without value as early evidence—that he was genuinely anxious to help those of less exalted rank as well, and was ready to do what he could for relatives, for friends, and for anyone in trouble, even for slaves. And despite his reputation for gravity, he seems to have appreciated cheerfulness in others; and certainly, as any reader of the dialogues must admit, he had himself a most attractive sense of humour.

To sum up, we may say that he was a man of deep understanding of human nature; courageous, forthright, loyal to his friends and to his ideals, kindly, humorous, temperate, and just. His lasting conviction was of a good and divine purpose in the world, and he believed that to conform his life to this purpose was at once a man's duty and his greatest privilege. Plato's dignity is the dignity of a man who felt himself to be fulfilling a divine mission as the opponent of amorality and of purely mechanistic views of life, as well as of apathy in matters of religion: the champion of the gospel of "true philosophy, than which a greater boon has never come nor ever will come to the human race, bestowed on us by the gods".⁶¹ There is nothing in the world more important for man to do than to try to acquire Knowledge and Virtue: "for great is the reward, and great the hope".⁶²

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY DIALOGUES

OLYMPIODORUS records a remark of Simmias, that interpreters would never be able to grasp the essence of Platonism, because one may study Plato's physics, his ethics, his theology, and so many different aspects of his work. It is undoubtedly true that Plato's writings mean something slightly different to every one of his readers, simply because his subject-matter covers so wide a field, and every reader gleans more from those parts that interest him most. The emphasis will be shifted from, say, ethics to metaphysics, or vice versa, or the ratio of importance between literary merit and philosophical content may even be affected, according to the mental environment and subjective instincts of the reader. This makes an unbiased exposition of Plato's philosophy very difficult. There is the further trouble that we are not dealing with a fixed and rigid system, but with the evolution of the whole of a man's thought, with all its uncertainties, changes, and fluctuations; so that to give a comprehensive account would be next to impossible, as Plato himself would certainly agree.

In these chapters⁶⁴ we will discuss Plato purely as a philosopher, which was what he considered himself primarily to be, and try to trace the evolution of his main philosophical beliefs. With the aid of Aristotle's evidence and some consideration of earlier thinkers we can not only roughly determine where in the dialogues Socrates' thought ends and Plato's begins, but also reach some understanding of the stages by which the Theory of Ideas was developed. We

shall consider this development, and notice also some other motives that helped to determine the nature of some of the more important dialogues.

It is an accepted fact that Plato's earliest works may be grouped under the heading "Socratic". Aristotle tells us⁶⁵ that Socrates concerned himself with ethics, but not with nature as a whole; he contributed to logic by his inductive arguments and search for general definitions, but did not, apparently, interest himself in physics or metaphysics, at least in later life. He probably inquired into the existing state of physical knowledge, but found no answer to the questions that he wished to ask. The nearest he came to metaphysical speculation seems to have been in his assumption of an absolute good which is capable of definition and is independent of custom and convention, and in his belief that things are as they are because, as he is made to say in the *Phædo*,⁶⁶ "it is best that they should be so". But the evidence appears to be conclusive that he formulated no physical or metaphysical theories to explain his beliefs, which he held simply as a matter of faith. We do not even know that he believed in gods in any truly religious sense, and on the question of immortality of the soul he held that knowledge was impossible: this is a certain inference from the *Apology*. Hence we may confidently assert that dialogues proclaiming the Theory of Ideas or the immortality of the soul show an advance of Plato's own. On the other hand, certain shorter works, far less elaborate in character, may reasonably be assigned to the early years of Plato's literary activity, which have been called the "Socratic" period. To this period, then, we will attribute the *Apology*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, and *Euthyphro*.

The *Apology*,⁶⁷ written probably soon after 394 B.C., may be mentioned first as being different in character from the other works. It purports to be the speech made by Socrates at his trial. It is very probable, however, that a good deal

that Socrates did *not* say has been incorporated, especially in the second and third sections of the main speech which was delivered before the verdict was pronounced. In particular the second section, the interrogation of Meletus, can have little foundation in historical fact; Plato takes an opportunity to attack Meletus, whom he seems to have disliked intensely—and incidentally Meletus represented the traditional authority of the poets, which Plato rejected—and in doing so makes it impossible to record the real refutation of one of the charges. This charge, of corrupting the young, received a further answer from Plato later on, in the *Gorgias*. As to the charge of irreligion, Socrates gives a straightforward answer that is probably faithful to the original speech, explaining how he came to be confused through long-standing prejudice with the Ionian physical philosophers and also with the Sophists; but in general the defence is made to rest on a positive explanation of what Socrates *was*, and in this picture, although it is undoubtedly a true one, may be seen some special Platonic *apologia* that was probably calculated to suit the public for which it was written better than a plain reporter's account of the historical defence.

Apologia is also to be seen in Plato's other early works. The *Euthyphro* explains Socrates' belief that a truly good action must be good primarily because it conforms to an absolute standard of goodness, not because it is pleasing to the gods. Herein lies Socrates' criticism of traditional religion, of seers and of poets who claimed to have special knowledge of truth through divine inspiration. It may well be that this little dialogue was written between the time of Socrates' prosecution and the time of the trial, but it is probable that no other work was composed before Socrates' death; Plato's other apologetics were intended to vindicate his memory. The *Crito* explains Socrates' refusal to escape, as he could have done, after his conviction, and thereby proves his recognition of society's laws and his loyalty to

the state. The *Laches*, *Lysis*, and *Charmides* contain an indirect reply to the charge of corruption of the young by showing the true nature of Socrates' discussions.

We have already explained, in Part I, that in these "Socratic" dialogues Plato aimed at exhibiting Socrates as he really was, never dogmatic, but eager to encourage everyone, and particularly the young, in the pursuit of truth. His desire to reduce his young friend to a state of perplexity and to an admission of ignorance does not imply a purely destructive attitude, as such an admission is a necessary preliminary to a constructive search for knowledge of absolute right and wrong; and indeed the inconsistencies, paradoxes, and apparent failures to achieve any result usually contain a barely concealed "masked conclusion". Thus in the *Euthyphro* the suggestion that piety is "doing what is pleasing to the gods" is rejected on the ground that the gods' pleasure can only be an outcome or incidental attribute of the act, and we have not been given the essence or definition of piety. But although the essence of piety has apparently not been found by the end of the dialogue, it is clear that it must be related to an absolute good independent of the gods. In the *Laches*, attempts to define courage lead to the formula "knowledge of good and evil"—but this, says Socrates, is the whole of virtue, not courage only: The apparent conclusion is that courage has not been discovered, but the real result is the demonstration of one of Socrates' convictions, that the attainment of the knowledge which any one virtue presupposes must bring with it all the other virtues as well; without "knowledge of good and evil" we can have none of the virtues, but with it we have all.

The *Charmides*, again, begins with a quest for a definition of temperance. The suggestion is made that temperance consists in doing one's own job, but it is at once clear that doing one's own job will not necessarily be doing what is good, and that to do good one must have knowledge. At

this point the discussion becomes wider with the new suggestion that temperance is self-knowledge—the virtue prescribed by the Delphic injunction, “Know thyself”. But if the précept be taken to recommend knowledge of what one knows and what one does not know—which would indeed imply an awareness of the scope of all the sciences—this is still not enough; it does not include a scale of values by which to appraise the mental state of oneself or of other people. Only knowledge of right and wrong could give us that. Again at the end of this dialogue we find the complaint that the object of the search has not been found, since temperance as defined by Charmides was found to be useless, whereas in fact, because it is a virtue, it must be useful.

But more than a hint has been given of the true definition, and for the implied conclusion we have not far to seek: temperance, like all other virtues, depends upon knowledge of right and wrong.

These masked conclusions were no doubt intended to bring home to the reader more forcibly than a plain statement could have done the truths upon which Plato wanted to insist. Moreover to represent that any sort of instruction was given would have been to offer a false impression of Socrates, and in these early dialogues Plato was clearly seeking to give an accurate portrait. At the same time he was providing himself with an opportunity of thinking out in detail the implications of Socrates’ philosophy, and even in the *Charmides* we can see that he was interested in the application of Socrates’ beliefs to something wider than the morality of the individual. The knowledge that alone could provide a sound code of private morality could also alone impart the means of judging our fellow-men.

About 390 B.C. appeared a dialogue largely critical in nature, aimed at unfounded claims to knowledge and the false profession of ability to teach. The *Euthydemus* is mainly an attack on the less reputable type of Sophist. The

Sophists were travelling teachers, who claimed to teach all manner of subjects, some of them almost anything; the development of democracy brought with it a demand for training in such abilities as a public life requires, and in the absence of established schools for higher instruction Athenian democracy found its demand for education supplied by the Sophists. Some of these teachers attained high renown for the instruction which they gave in public speaking and in the writing of speeches; in the education of a democracy these would be the chief requirements, and high fees were often paid for the privilege of a lesson. Some were no doubt quacks, content to pass off all manner of nonsense in return for a fee. Such are Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who figure in the dialogue that takes its name from the former. It is true that the great age of the Sophists had been the latter half of the previous century, when Plato was a boy; but Plato no doubt not only remembered Socrates' criticisms of these claimants to knowledge, but felt that the spirit of Sophistry was still present in fourth-century society. Isocrates, whom we have already mentioned as having founded a school of oratory about 392 B.C., was not indeed a Sophist, but from Plato's point of view his teaching lacked a sound philosophical basis. He did not attempt to inquire into the purpose of life or the moral sanctions of human conduct, and yet set out to educate the young for political careers; ability to speak might be useful, but knowledge of right and wrong as a guide to *what should be spoken* was a fundamental need that no professing teacher had any right to disregard. There is mention in the *Euthydemus* of "a man who thinks himself very clever, one of those who are very good at writing speeches for the law-courts",⁶⁸ and the reference is almost certainly to Isocrates; these speech-writers are soon afterwards⁶⁹ described as "half-way between the philosopher and the politician". But the main object of ridicule in this dialogue is the "eristic" or quibbling

arguments that had been used by certain Sophists not to ascertain truth but to give an appearance of cleverness and wit. This perverse type of argument found favour, in Plato's time, with members of the Megarian school founded by Euclides, who had been a follower of Socrates, and Plato probably had this school in mind when he wrote the *Euthydemus*.

At one point in this work we meet what was probably felt as a real difficulty, and what had certainly retarded up to Plato's time the progress of logic, the different uses of the verb "to be". One Greek expression can mean "the true", "the real", and "that which exists"; this had led to errors and difficulties among serious thinkers in the past, as use of language has been a stumbling-block to philosophic thought in many ways since, and Euthydemus and others like him delighted in the absurdities that could be propounded with an appearance of truth by a careful manipulation of this and other verbal ambiguities. To wish Cleinias to become wise implied a wish that he should no longer be what he was; "to be no longer" meant death; therefore the wish was that he should die. Again, "what is not" is nothing; but "to say something false" = "to say what is not" (the Greek is the same), and therefore there can be no such thing as falsity or falsehood. Such conclusions are obviously absurd, but they reflect a real difficulty that had puzzled genuine seekers after truth since the time of Parmenides of Elea, whom we shall discuss in the next chapter, and Plato performed a real service when he cleared it up later in the *Sophist*.

The date of the *Euthydemus* is by no means certain, but opinions may be said to vary even more considerably about the date of another dialogue concerned mainly with logic, the *Cratylus*. The *Cratylus* may well have been written several years later, but some would place it before the *Euthydemus*, and it will be convenient to mention it here. This work is concerned with the relationship between thought and

language, and the logical importance of "names" of things. It seems to be directed largely against the views of Antisthenes, another one-time follower of Socrates, and reputedly the originator of the Cynic school of thought, who maintained that one thing can have only one name, the name that properly belongs to it, and that no definition is possible except an enumeration of parts. At one point Cratylus maintains, like Euthydemus, that falsehood is impossible: what is called a false statement must be a true statement about someone or something else. Here we are shown again the absurdities that resulted from the doctrines of the Megarians, who were regarded as in many ways following (somewhat crudely) the Eleatic tradition, as well as of Cratylus himself and the Heraclitean school to which he belonged. In the dialogue as a whole Socrates is made to show that "names" and language in general are merely matters of convention, but that philosophical knowledge can be attained despite the shortcomings of language as a means.

Another dialogue, far more elaborate in structure and far more artistically satisfying from the literary point of view, can with much more probability be assigned to 390 B.C. or thereabouts. This is the *Protagoras*, which purports to be an account of a conversation held in a large private house, at which the three great Sophists, Hippias, Prodicus, and Protagoras, were present. Protagoras and Socrates contribute most to the conversation, and Protagoras is treated with considerable respect; he is a man of very different calibre from Euthydemus. Nevertheless, as a professed teacher of the political art he suffers from the same deficiency as all the teachers whom Socrates and Plato had met; he lacks the necessary basis of philosophic knowledge. It is probable that the *Protagoras* is to some extent directed against Isocrates, and it certainly seems to have had the effect of eliciting a reply from Isocrates in his introduction to the *Helen*; this in turn was to receive a full-scale counter-reply

in Plato's *Phædrus*. But others too are criticized in the *Protagoras*, as we shall see. Indeed Plato seems, throughout the dialogue, to be rejecting false views, as a measure preliminary to the formulation of his own philosophy.

After Protagoras has explained the purpose of his teaching, Socrates is made to express surprise that the "political art" can be taught: he had not thought that it could. There is a short discussion in which Protagoras argues that excellence as a citizen and virtue in general can be taught, and then Socrates poses the question: in what sense are justice, temperance, piety, and the other special virtues one? In later works it appears that Plato himself would describe them as being related to virtue as a whole as species to a genus. But now Socrates asks, are they mutually exclusive parts of the whole of virtue, or are they all merely different names of one and the same thing? Protagoras prefers the former alternative, that the virtues differ like the parts of the face. Socrates now puts forward two arguments, both of which contain fallacies, and this seems to be an artifice of Plato's to show that false conclusions can only be deduced from false reasoning. In both of these arguments Socrates tries to counter Protagoras by "proving" that the virtues are closely similar, if not identical. We may perhaps conjecture that Plato is here parodying the false reasoning and the false conclusions of the Megarians, who tried to interpret Socrates' theories along Eleatic lines. At the same time what Socrates says is sufficient to suggest that the special virtues are not mutually exclusive either. We may say, indeed, that both horns of the dilemma with which Protagoras had been presented are shown to be equally unattractive: the virtues are not synonymous, but neither are they altogether distinct. It seems likely, then, that Plato is refuting two extreme views, though it would be hazardous to guess who the holders were of the second view that Plato here attacks.

Socrates' third argument contains at least a hint of the

real answer to the problem of the relation of the special virtues, when he suggests that good things are things that are useful; but the argument is cut short, and after a brief interlude we have a typically Sophistic explanation or exegesis of a passage in Simonides, of which Socrates, who pretends to take it seriously, offers an alternative interpretation. This is clearly playful parody of the almost superstitious regard that was accorded to the teaching of the poets. A great deal of existing poetry had been written with a didactic purpose, for in early society the few who were regarded as learned were the chief source of information for the rest of the community, and as few could write the instruction was put into the form of a poem that could be remembered. The poets expounded information of all kinds, from theology to agriculture, and on all subjects alike their teaching was accepted as divinely inspired. The seer, the poet, and the philosopher were one.⁷⁰ Something of this spirit of awe accorded to the poet still remained in Plato's time, and in Plato's view these poets did not possess the knowledge that alone could justify a claim to teach. He believed, as we shall see when we come to the *Phædrus* and the *Seventh Letter*, that no true philosopher would try to convey truth in writing; and if these poets had attempted to teach by means of the written word, they cannot themselves have had knowledge.

After a further interlude, Protagoras is again asked what he thinks about the relationship between the special virtues, and this time he replies that while most of them are alike, courage is quite distinct. Socrates undertakes to prove that courage is not distinct, and in doing so introduces a fallacy into his argument which even Protagoras is able to see and to point out. He had obtained an admission that knowledge gave boldness, but not that boldness was courage. Now from the course of his argument it is clear that Socrates is thinking of *technical* knowledge; and from this obviously fallacious

argument, which, incidentally, justifies us in seeing fallacies elsewhere, we may infer that Plato wishes to show that no amount of *technical instruction* bought from a teacher can provide real virtue. Indeed those who believed that virtue could be bought in exchange for a fee are refuted in the dialogue as a whole, if not in this particular passage; for, as we have seen, Protagoras' claim to teach virtue was questioned from the start.

At this point Socrates is made to suggest that living pleasantly is good, and that pleasure in itself, considered apart from any other qualities that may accompany it, is good. After obtaining Protagoras' agreement that the majority are wrong in supposing knowledge to be anything but a guiding principle, he enlists Protagoras' support in explaining to an imaginary popular audience that they are wrong in supposing some pleasures to be, in themselves, bad, and in interpreting (in the only way possible on the assumption that all pleasure is good) the meaning of "being overcome by pleasure". This expression will have to mean accepting a large amount of pain in order to get only a small amount of pleasure—which is, of course, a mistake; on the assumption that pleasure is the good, one should take that course of action which will provide the greatest quantity of pleasure in the long run, when pleasures and pains that will result in the future are taken into account, as well as those of the moment. Such a weighing up of pleasures and pains would require a sort of "measuring" ability, derived from a kind of knowledge, to ensure that the best course was chosen; and if courage is admittedly an honourable and good thing, it is also pleasant, and the coward will be one who mistakenly shirks pains when he might by facing them obtain pleasures that would more than compensate for all that he endured. Courage, then, is after all a form of wisdom.

It has been hotly disputed⁷¹ whether we are to accept this "hedonistic calculus", as it has been called, as Plato's own

view of the matter at the time of writing: Professor Hackforth believes that we should, that this was an explanation that at one time suggested itself to Plato of Socrates' dictum, "Virtue is Knowledge"; others believe that the passage is not meant to be taken seriously, Wilamowitz supposing that it is an attempt to beat the Sophists with their own weapons, Taylor that it is a demonstration that the doctrine that Virtue is Knowledge can be deduced from vulgar hedonism, and Cornford that the Sophists are being made to confess that their philosophy is basically the same as the ordinary man's. This is a difficult question to decide, but on balance it seems probable that we should see here not an exposition of Plato's own doctrine at the time, but further criticism of others. At the end of the dialogue Socrates says that he would have liked to go on until the nature of virtue had been discovered, thereby implying that this has not as yet been achieved; and this apparent failure is in keeping with the earlier works. But if we are to find a real conclusion at all, we might expect it to be "masked", whereas the answer just given, that virtue is a kind of knowledge that can measure pleasures and pains, is hardly "masked" at all; and there is no evidence in Aristotle or elsewhere that Plato ever held hedonistic views. It is true that the calculus is used as a basis for a proof that Virtue=Knowledge, but earlier on fallacious argument had been used to prove that Temperance=Wisdom. In Plato's view courage was probably no more knowledge *in this sense* than temperance was wisdom in the sense that they were identical. The earnestness of the language, however, of course implies that there is some truth contained in the argument—virtue is knowledge of a kind, knowledge, in fact, not of what is most pleasant, but of what is most *valuable*, as was indicated earlier on.

Hence it seems probable that in this part of the dialogue, when Socrates with ironical banter congratulates Protagoras on his high opinion of the value of knowledge, and enlists

his aid in addressing "the many", he is showing both the Sophists and the ordinary man the sort of philosophical basis, if such it may be called, on which their actions are founded. He is careful to warn Protagoras that he may withdraw from the agreement that Socrates should lead the discussion, and "the many", too, may retract their former admissions if they can point to any other end than pleasure: otherwise they must follow where the argument leads them. They are then led on by Socrates to acknowledge the conclusions implied in their admissions. "The many", of course, would hardly recognize their own opinions in the systematized theory that Socrates is made to produce, but the theory was implicit in the views and in the behaviour which Plato so often attributes to them. Fundamentally, the Sophists and "the many" alike care nothing about any "badness" save miscalculation of pleasure. Ostensibly, they are shown that Virtue is Knowledge even on their own premisses; but there must be irony in the suggestion that the only kind of wisdom which, if they were honest, they would recognize is ability to measure pleasure and pain.

At the end of the dialogue we are presented with a paradox: Protagoras, who had held that virtue was teachable, had been anxious to prove that virtue was anything but knowledge, while Socrates himself, although he had not thought that knowledge could be taught, had been endeavouring to prove that virtue was knowledge; yet it would seem that if virtue was knowledge, it must be teachable, and that if it was anything else it could not be taught. We may conclude that Socrates is somehow right in both his postulates—virtue is knowledge, but it cannot be taught by the Sophists' method of teaching, as though one could pay a fee and receive in exchange a parcel of knowledge ready made up. But the paradox is not resolved until we come to the *Meno*. There we find that the knowledge which leads to virtue is indeed not teachable, and the reason why becomes apparent. It may

be that Plato was not sure of the answer to his paradox when he wrote the *Protagoras*; but in any case the *Meno* appears to be a sequel, as it were, and it certainly explains the difficulty. If our interpretation of the *Protagoras* is correct, Plato has swept aside, for the time being at any rate, all false opinions of virtue, and now in the *Meno* presents the first instalment of his attempt to make of Socrates' dicta a coherent philosophical system.

The *Meno* is fairly short for a work of this period, and is written in dramatic form without any introduction. It opens with the question, "Is virtue teachable?" and the directness and conciseness of this work suggests an eagerness to set forth what may suddenly have occurred to Plato as an answer to the paradox which he had posed at the end of the *Protagoras*. This new theory incorporates an element of Pythagoreanism, which does not appear in earlier dialogues, and it may be that this was a result of Plato's visit to Italy and Sicily in 387 B.C. But we cannot be at all sure of this, for Pythagorean views were certainly well known at Athens, and Plato must have met disciples of the creed on his other travels as well.

The opening question leads to a discussion of the nature of virtue, and attempts at definition show the impossibility of defining any special virtue without reference to virtue as a whole. Here again the unity of the virtues is suggested, and this time the species-genus relationship of the special virtues to virtue as a whole is clearly indicated by means of analogies. But when Socrates himself disclaims knowledge of what virtue is, Meno expresses surprise at his readiness to inquire into its nature. He makes use of a long-established eristic argument: how can you look for a thing you know nothing about, for you will not know what to look for, or recognize it if you find it. Socrates replies by citing what he had heard from "certain priests and priestesses", that the soul is

immortal, and that at death it departs to other realms. Since, then, the soul beholds all things in this world and the next, it must acquire knowledge of everything; but at birth this knowledge is forgotten. Hence all that we call learning is really "recollection", and since all things are in some way akin to one another, the recollection of one thing may well bring back to us memory of many other things, indeed of everything else.

Meno then artfully asks another awkward question, whether Socrates can *teach* him that learning is recollection. Socrates undertakes to *show* him that it is, and proceeds to present Meno's slave with a geometrical problem. He brings him first to an admission of ignorance of something that he had thought he knew, and then finally to discovery of the correct solution. It is true, of course, that Socrates has asked leading questions, but the principle remains that the boy was enabled to understand each step in the procedure with his own intelligence; Socrates guided him on the way, but no one can transmit understanding. If he were asked such questions often enough, says Socrates, the understanding would become as detailed and lasting as anyone's. Since he had not acquired the knowledge or understanding at any time during his life, he must have acquired it before he was born, and the memory of it was stirred by Socrates' questioning.

Socrates and Meno then return to the original question, whether virtue is teachable, and lay down as a hypothesis the proposition that if it is knowledge it will be teachable. Now goodness implies usefulness, but health and wealth, and even temperance and courage and the like, are only useful when rightly used or applied; we need to *know* how to use them aright; therefore virtue is a sort of wisdom or knowledge. But if it is knowledge and therefore teachable, where are the teachers? The claim of the Sophists, including Protagoras, is set aside, and great statesmen are shown to

have failed to teach virtue to their sons. If there are no teachers of virtue, it seems that virtue is after all not knowledge.

Socrates then declares that "true opinion" may be as good a guide and as useful as knowledge; it differs from knowledge in not being permanent, as it has no understanding of causes, which can only come with recollection, but in other respects it is equally efficient.

The absence of teachers disposes of the possibility of virtue being taught, and neither knowledge nor "true opinion" come "by nature", so that it follows that great statesmen must have depended on "true opinion" derived from "inspiration or possession", imparted by "divine dispensation". "But", says Socrates at the end of the dialogue, "we shall not be sure of all this before we inquire into the true nature of virtue, in and by itself."

These closing words suggest that the decisions reached are by no means the end of the matter, and if we look for a "masked conclusion" we have not far to seek. Apart from the difficulty of the absence of teachers, such inquiry into the nature of virtue as was made pointed to virtue being, in fact, a form of knowledge; and the laying down of the hypothesis that, if virtue is knowledge, it will be teachable, following as it does *immediately after* the demonstration that knowledge can only come from recollection, is bound to strike the reader as unnecessary and unsound. The implied conclusion, then, is that real virtue, virtue of the highest kind, is knowledge, but it is not teachable, because it differs from technical knowledge in that it can only be derived by personal recollection. No doubt Plato considered that a statesman who possessed this real knowledge would be able to impart at least "true opinion" to the people, as he suggests in later dialogues; and no doubt he also believed that "true opinion" would lead to correct conduct, and had in fact been the guide of nearly all of Athens' best citizens.

But knowledge remains the only foundation of true virtue, and an indication of the method by which it can be gained, or rather regained, has been given in the cross-questioning of the slave. Socrates' own method of dealing with the young is used by Plato as part of a scheme of epistemology that was to give a systematized philosophical backing to Socrates' principles. The paradox with which the *Protagoras* closes has thus been resolved.

The *Gorgias* probably appeared very shortly after Plato's return from Sicily in 387 B.C. There is even more evidence here of Pythagorean influence; but it will be convenient to leave discussion of the Pythagoreans until the next chapter. This dialogue takes the form of a conversation between Socrates and the great Sicilian Sophist, orator, and statesman, Gorgias, and his friends Polus and Callicles. Callicles, with whom much of the debate is conducted, is significantly enough an unprincipled young man who is about to embark upon a political career. The subject of the conversation is the nature of rhetoric, and the absence in contemporary society of philosophical knowledge as a background to the training and practice of the political orator. Rhetoric is found to be "an art of persuasion designed to inculcate belief, not to teach"; it is a form of "flattery", "an unreal image of a branch of politics". Such is the outcome of what is really a comparison between the philosophical way of life and the politician's career as it appeared to Plato at this time. The setting out of the rival claims of these two ways of life almost certainly represents the conflict that had gone on in Plato's own mind when he had to choose between a life of seclusion and an active political career;⁷² it shows clearly enough that the life of the public speaker in Athens would be a life of opportunism. It would mean abandonment of principles and ideals, a sacrifice which, as Plato explains in the *Seventh Letter*, he was not prepared to make. Read in the light of this knowledge; that Plato was at the time of writing at the

parting of the ways, the *Gorgias* is a most significant document. Many statesmen since, from Cicero to Balfour and Smuts, have during the course of an active political life turned their thoughts to philosophy, usually in leisure hours or when their policy has been out of favour and has led to an enforced withdrawal from public life; but Plato refused even to enter upon the career for which he had been intended, because he was convinced that, contemporary politics being what they were, he could achieve nothing without strong support, and this was not forthcoming.

There is also, no doubt, a particular reference in the *Gorgias* to Isocrates, the chief teacher of rhetoric in Athens at the time at which the dialogue was written,⁷³ a teacher of whose system of education, as we have already seen, Plato strongly disapproved. Besides explaining Plato's own reasons for choosing the life which he subsequently led in preference to a political one, this work is no doubt intended to show why Isocrates' choice was wrong. Isocrates, it is true, avoided public office, and some have been of the opinion that he fell between two stools; Plato certainly held that he had as good as sat on the wrong one. There is parody in the *Gorgias* of at least one passage in Isocrates' speech *Against the Sophists*, which was written as a sort of prospectus of Isocrates' school in 390 B.C.

We know that about this time, probably about 388 B.C., a Sophist named Polycrates published a pamphlet in the form of a speech, a recognized literary form for such a purpose, entitled *An Accusation of Socrates*. From Libanius, a writer of the fourth century A.D., and from a passage in Xenophon, we can infer what the contents of this speech were. He seems to have confined himself to the charge of corruption of the young, the charge to which, it will be remembered, Plato had given no specific or detailed reply in the *Apology*; and one of the points that Polycrates apparently made was that Socrates had led astray Critias and Alcibiades, and was

therefore responsible for all the harm which these two adventurers had brought upon Athens. To this point no reference could have been made at Socrates' trial, in view of the terms of the amnesty that followed the reign of the Thirty Tyrants. There is only a very slight allusion in the *Gorgias*⁷⁴ to Alcibiades: the true facts about his relationship with Socrates are explained later in the *Symposium*, where it is shown that he never followed Socrates' advice; in the *Gorgias*, Socrates is merely made to predict that Alcibiades may be made to suffer for Athens' misfortunes, for which Themistocles, Cimon, and Pericles (rulers, of course, who lacked *knowledge*) were really to blame; Alcibiades and others like him were not really responsible, except, perhaps, in part. But in the famous concluding scenes of this dialogue, where Socrates is made to predict his own trial and condemnation and death, we almost certainly have a general reply to Polycrates' attack. Already he has stated his own beliefs, in contrast to those of his hearers: that wrong-doing is worse than being wronged, and that not to be punished for doing a wrong is worse than to be punished. Now he says that if he is brought to trial having endeavoured, as he has, to help his fellow-countrymen, he will be like a doctor who is brought to trial before a jury of children for all the operations he has performed, and all the medicine he has administered; and the prosecutor, to complete the simile, might easily be the cook. He would have nothing to say that could help him in his defence. Yet Socrates is sure that his main beliefs are sound, and his best help, indeed his only help at such a time, would be the consolation that he had done no wrong by word or deed to any man or god. To go to one's death without such consolation would be terrible indeed; but to die simply through inability to produce flattering oratory is no shame at all. No one but a fool or a coward fears death: only the consciousness of sin is to be feared. "Let anyone despise you for an idiot and mock at you, if

he will, and scourge you in dishonour; you will come to no harm, if you are really good, practising virtue. . . . This way of life is best, in the cultivation and practice of virtue so to live, and so to end your days."⁷⁵

Before leaving the *Gorgias* we should make mention of the allegory in which the souls of the dead are represented as being tried before a seat of judgment. Plato has several uses for such "myths", as they are called: sometimes they merely illustrate or support a conclusion that has already been reached by means of reason, and sometimes they give a "likely account" of a matter that cannot be tested or proved by mortal men. In the *Republic* they are suggested as a means by which a ruler with knowledge may communicate "true opinion" to his subjects. The short myth in the *Meno* was used to *support* the argument that true knowledge could only come from recollection, but the myth in the *Gorgias* explains in "picture-language" what Plato believes to be an approximation to the truth about our after-life. These "myths" are by no means "mythical" in the sense that they are necessarily untrue, and Plato is careful to introduce this one with an assurance of his belief that it is substantially true to fact.

Much of what we read in these "myths" is derived from the teaching of the Pythagoreans and Orphics, whom we shall discuss presently. We can see Pythagorean influence, too, in a certain development of Plato's view of the nature of virtue. (Virtue is now a harmony or right-ordering of the soul, in which the various special virtues have their own special functions under the general supervision, as it were, of what for the sake of consistency in translation we will call Temperance.) Justice makes a man act rightly towards men, and Piety makes him act rightly towards the gods, while Courage makes him avoid what is to be avoided, and face what he ought to face; and Temperance, which is now equated with Goodness or Virtue, makes possible and

arranges their proper functioning. This new theory is worked out much more fully in the *Republic*, and finds acceptance even in the *Philebus*. But there is no real break with Plato's earlier doctrine, and although Plato eventually reaches a view that is different from that of Socrates, it is not inconsistent with it. It is clear from the *Gorgias* itself, and it will become even clearer in the *Republic*, that apart from certain necessary qualities of nature, the one thing essential to the right-ordering of the soul is knowledge. In the *Gorgias* there is a strong and unequivocal denunciation of the view that pleasure should be our only aim in life, although there are good pleasures, and Plato clearly recognizes the importance of the emotions. He is not an ascetic. But when we read about "that part of the soul in which our desires lie",⁷⁶ we have the first suggestion of another theory which Plato was soon to work out in detail; this is the theory of the tripartite soul, and we shall find that when this theory is used in the *Republic* in conjunction with the view of virtue as a harmony, knowledge is still the all-important factor. Knowledge controls the functioning of desire, emotion, and reason as a unifying principle.

Having expressed his views on contemporary politics in no uncertain terms in the *Gorgias*, Plato settled down to the administration of the Academy, and to the further development and systematization of his philosophical beliefs.

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF THE THEORY OF IDEAS

BEFORE considering the dialogues in which the theory of Ideas is propounded, it will be best to examine the influences that led to its formation. There is no doubt that the initial impulse which started Plato in the search for some such system was given by Socrates, whose methods suggested to Plato that the answer which he was seeking must be connected in some way with the question of definition; on this we shall insist again later. But the problem itself, and the answer that Plato gave to it, will become clearer if we briefly trace the course of earlier philosophic thought, and thereby at the same time reveal the other influences that affected Plato.

In the early part of the fourth century B.C., the time at which Plato was writing, the vast majority of farmers and artisans, indeed of the whole population of Attica, still believed in the gods of Olympus, and in their local deities. It is true that during the fourth century, as the result of colonization and trade, men became less closely bound up with the communities to which they belonged, and that personalities revealed themselves more, in literature, in art, and in politics; but even so it is probable that relatively few, only the more enlightened, dared to disbelieve in anthropomorphic gods. The ancient settlements of Ionia, on the other hand, to which many Athenians had emigrated at the time when the mainland of Greece was disturbed by the Dorian invasions, were even in early days far ahead of Greece proper in philosophical thought, as they were

also, for the most part, in literature and art. Contact with the East, comparative tranquillity, and a spirit of adventure, all helped to encourage progress; speculation in Greek Asia Minor devised both the family relationship of the gods of Olympus, and also that later conception of the divine which was ultimately to prove them false. As early as the sixth century B.C., Xenophanes had attacked anthropomorphism by saying that "If horses or oxen had hands, and could draw, or make statues, horses would represent the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen". Such attacks eventually led some thinkers to reject religion altogether; but originally they were due to an advanced conception of divinity.

Milesian philosophers asked themselves such questions as these: "What is the universe? What is it made of, and how did it begin?" They were not really scientific in their methods of answering these questions: they did not use experiment even for their simpler problems.⁷⁷ They were dogmatic, with the self-assurance proper to the successors of the inspired poet-seer of early antiquity; for in very early days the wise man of the community had expounded the facts of the past, the present, and the future as if possessed of divine inspiration. The earliest Milesian thinkers of whom we know expected that the basic material of the universe could be shown to be some one substance which through various permutations was able to present the variety of things that we perceive, and regarded this primary substance as divine. In the early part of the sixth century Anaximander explained that the world had evolved from an unordered mass, and he called this "divine". Such a conception was at least an advance upon the old idea that the gods were subject to all the weaknesses of human beings; but these early thinkers, through having undermined the authority of the Olympic religion, became the forerunners of materialism; and some sixty years after Anaximander's

pronouncement, Heraclitus of Ephesus, who was by no means a materialist himself, further helped the cause of materialism when he remarked that everything was constantly changing: every animal and every inanimate object in course of time disintegrates, and new things come into being. Nothing is permanent; all is in flux. Heraclitus had, it is true, a theory of a divine Logos or Reason permeating the universe, but the part of his philosophy that commended itself to the majority of Plato's contemporaries was the theory of flux. "Heraclitus says somewhere that everything is transitory and nothing is constant; comparing things to the current of a river, he says that you can never step twice into the same stream";⁷⁸ on the second entry the river will not be the same, "for fresh waters are ever flowing in".⁷⁹ Cratylus, Heraclitus' disciple, went further, and said that you cannot step into the same river once: it is changing continuously, even as you put your foot into it. The outcome of these theories, however little it may have been anticipated, was scepticism about the existence of any deity; indeed one reason for the charge of irreligion brought against Socrates was probably, as we saw, the suggestion that he had interested himself overmuch in Ionian physical speculation. "How," men came to ask, "if nothing is permanent, can such things as justice and piety exist, or anyhow be important, when, if they are to be of any value, they must be eternally the same?" One ready answer was that they are only matters of convention.

This mechanistic materialism, for which the Ionians, if not materialists themselves, had paved the way, was abhorrent to Plato. Those qualities of character that he had admired so much in Socrates, the beauty of the beautiful things of this world, all those things, in fact, that he felt must be in some way akin to the divine, were denied the reality and the permanence which he was convinced they must possess. They were all attributed either to purely mechanistic causes

or else to a sort of hallucination of the senses or the mind. Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ, another physical philosopher, who died about a year before Plato was born, had spoken of a Mind that gave the initial motion to what was originally a formless, characterless mass, and thereby brought into being the universe as we know it, in much the same way as Anaximander had spoken of a "separating out" of primary substances; but Anaxagoras was merely working out another mechanistic system, and made no further use of the Mind which he had had to posit to explain the origin of the system. Socrates in his early days had been a pupil of Archelaus, a disciple of Anaxagoras, and we read in the *Phædo* of his disappointment at finding that Anaxagoras had not spoken of any design or purpose in the world;⁸⁰ Anaxagoras' system, despite his incorporation of a Mind, was no more teleological than any of its predecessors.

There was, however, another tradition, the Italian Pythagorean tradition, that was very different. This was based on religious mysticism, and had much in common with an earlier religious sect, that of the Orphics, whose doctrines entered the Greek world by way of Thrace and spread rapidly during the sixth century B.C. Pythagoras himself, a Samian by birth, seems to have founded a community at Croton in the south of Italy about 529 B.C.; but after a while political disturbances led to the expulsion of the Pythagoreans, most of whom eventually left Italy altogether for several decades. At the beginning of the fourth century we find several of them returning, and Archytas presiding over a Pythagorean community established at Tarentum.

We know little about the views of Pythagoras himself, except that he taught his followers a new religious way of life; but of the Pythagoreans who came after him we know more. They believed in transmigration of souls: man is a fallen spirit, the body is the tomb of the soul, and our object in this life should be to keep the soul free, so far as possible,

from contamination by the body, so that it may finally obtain release from the cycle of birth and reincarnation that must continue until it is wholly purified. Purification can best be achieved by study of the order of the universe—in particular, of things in it that appear to be eternal, such as the motions of the stars and the truths of mathematics. If you study this order and harmony, your soul will become orderly too, and will be in harmony with the rest of the scheme of the universe. This doctrine is bound up with the belief that the universal scheme is dependent upon numerical ratios, and they were not so much interested in matter as in the arrangement or plan of all that exists—to use an Aristotelian expression, in the *formal* cause of things. Their philosophy implied a view of the soul very different from the usual Greek conception, according to which the body was the important part of a man, and the soul, if it meant anything else at all than the breath of life, was something less than an unsubstantial wraith. Such doctrine might have stemmed the tide of materialism, had not the mystery religions become unpopular because of quack, mendicant priests; but the other-worldliness of the Pythagorean theory, in contrast to the materialism that denied the worth of all that he valued, was bound to make a strong appeal to Plato.

The difference between the Ionian and the Pythagorean traditions was emphasized by Parmenides of Elea, who flourished in the first half of the fifth century, and is said to have been himself a rebellious Pythagorean. He wrote a poem consisting of three parts—Proem, the Way of Truth, and the Way of Seeming. In the Way of Truth he showed that according to reason change was impossible, and that therefore all things are one; for if only what is thinkable can be, void, being unthinkable, cannot exist. Here we observe again the ambiguity of the Greek word for “to be”—the Greek for “void” and for “that which is not” is the same. This, then, was the universe as reason would have

it—a single, unchanging, homogeneous One, “like the mass of a rounded sphere”; for to speak of “what is not” is nonsense, and is no true “way” at all. The Way of Seeming describes the way that is followed by erring mortals, who believe in the existence of the objects of reason, and yet at the same time believe in the evidence of their senses, which suggest the possibility of birth, growth, decay, and many other kinds of change. The gulf between the universe as reason would have it and the universe as the senses perceive it appeared to be impassable, and Parmenides offered no solution of the riddle. But the problem he posed made necessary some attempt to reconcile the senses with the demands of reason, and the most important answer that had been given up to Plato’s time was that proposed by Leucippus of Miletus and Democritus of Abdera, whose doctrine was an extreme form of mechanistic materialism. They began by making a concession to experience, as Aristotle puts it,⁸¹ and positing void, and from that point onwards lean to the side of reason. The whole of reality is made up of atoms and of void; and each of the atoms conforms to the description of Parmenides’ One.

Thus what Plato wanted to regard as eternal truths were explained as merely the result of certain permutations and combinations of atoms. The effect of such theories on moral behaviour was liable to be disastrous; and ever since the end of the Persian Wars men’s minds had gradually become less occupied with external nature, and more concerned with the rules that governed the conduct of their lives. Those who followed the trend of philosophical thought found Parmenides’ paradox sufficient reason for turning aside from purely physical speculation; and a good deal of scepticism and agnosticism is to be found among the Sophists who in the latter part of the fifth century provided the only means of advanced education obtainable in Greece. Theoretically Gorgias was what we might call a nihilist: he

believed that nothing had any real existence, that if anything had we could not know it, and that if we could have any such knowledge we could not impart it to others. Protagoras, too, denied the existence of any objective reality, but was prepared to allow that the sensible world must be accepted as it seems for practical purposes: "Man is the measure of all things"—what *seems* true to each one of us *is* true for him. Anaxagoras had said that the hot and the cold, the moist and the dry coexist in things; and Heraclitus that a thing might be both sweet and sour. So too Protagoras assumed that all qualities in some sense coexist in things, and that different qualities may be perceived in them by different people; whereas the Atomists stated dogmatically that qualities like bitterness and sweetness had no real existence at all in themselves, but only existed "by convention", that is to say, in the minds of those who sensed them.

The Sophists performed valuable work in their way; they gave an impetus to learning, and taught and practised rhetoric with skill; and probably very few were what we should call immoral. Protagoras, for example, was not prepared to take disbelief in objective reality to what might be considered its logical conclusions. He acknowledged the value of morality as a social virtue. But Plato could see all the implications of a fundamental scepticism, and there must have been many who, like Callicles in the *Gorgias*, had come to suppose that if hot and cold were no more than matters of convention, then justice and all the other virtues probably were as well. Even Herodotus had pointed out how various were the ideas of different communities on what was right and what was wrong. Thrasymachus in Book I of the *Republic* bases his argument on the assumption that justice has no independent existence in nature, but is a mere conception of the mind used by the weak to prevent the strong from enjoying their natural heritage of power.

Such, then, was the position when Plato set out to devise

a philosophical system that would afford logical support to Socrates' beliefs; and he tried to do so by attempting to reconcile the two conflicting trends of Ionian and Pythagorean tradition. Socrates' interest in definition was his first clue; Socrates had said that we must be ready to give a definition of such things as justice and piety, and had implied that they were everlastingly the same. But Plato had been a pupil of Cratylus and possibly of a follower of Parmenides⁸³ as well, and he knew the teaching of the mechanistic materialists, that this world is a world of change and flux. His other clue was the Pythagorean theory that souls are immortal; and his answer to the problem was that what really exists—the realities of which we are thinking when we make our attempts at definition—are not in this world or universe at all. Such realities exist elsewhere, wherever our souls are before we are born; and we are born with a latent knowledge of what we have seen and known in this other world. Only on some such assumption could we account for our general notions, such as "equality", for example; for no two things that we have ever seen in this world are *exactly* alike, and yet we know what we mean by equality. The realities to which all the things that we know on earth bear but an imperfect resemblance Plato called Ideas or Forms, which was the word that Socrates had used to mean "genus" or "class"; but whereas to Socrates the word meant no more than this, Plato now made it into a technical ontological term. It signified something with a real, permanent, substantial, and independent existence outside the universe as we know it, as opposed to the "copy" or "likeness" that our senses can perceive; it existed in the realm of Being, not in this world, which he called a world of Becoming. This world is indeed a world of flux, but somewhere in "a region above the heavens", as he puts it in the *Phædrus* myth,⁸⁴ undying entities exist which are truly real, and the "patterns" of all that we perceive on earth.

We have seen that the Pythagoreans were interested in form rather than in *matter*, and that they believed that the order of the universe could be expressed in terms of numerical ratios. Pythagoras is said to have discovered the numerical proportions of the intervals of the octave, and this discovery apparently set him looking for numerical harmony elsewhere. The outcome was the pronouncement that all things are numbers. This may be explained briefly thus: the Pythagoreans analysed all numbers and geometrical lines, surfaces and solids, down to the primary point,⁸⁵ which they regarded, according to an old and mathematically erroneous belief, as having magnitude. They then, by a reverse process, thought of all numbers, lines, surfaces, and solids as being generated from the original point or Monad. The two elements of number, Oddness and Evenness, which they also called Limit and the Unlimited, were capable through the action of the one upon the other of producing the rest of the series of numbers. They then went further and accounted for the evolution of the world on the same lines. The world, too, started from a Monad, but a Monad that was itself a composite solid body, and in the evolution of the world this Monad may be regarded as the Limiting factor; the Unlimited in this case was the air that surrounded it. This primary body in the midst of space then inhaled the air as a living being, and the air separated things out to form the sensible universe. This serves to explain the Pythagorean belief that the essence of a thing consists in the numerical proportion of its parts, and that number can *represent* its form. This is the meaning of the statement that all things are numbers.

It seems that Plato later on adopted more and more of the Pythagorean doctrine. Aristotle tells us⁸⁶ that Plato differed from the Pythagoreans in that he gave his Ideas a separate existence, whereas for the Pythagoreans things *were* numbers; indeed later Pythagoreans seem to have regarded

numbers as being in some sense the matter of things; and he also differed in that he considered the general concepts of mathematics, which are eternal and immutable and yet not unique like the Ideas, to form a class by themselves, intermediate between Ideas and sensible objects.⁸⁷ He held, in fact, that there were not only Ideal numbers on a par with other Ideas, but also mathematical numbers; the latter could be added together, the former could not. But the resemblances between Pythagoreanism and Plato's doctrine in its more developed form were very close. According to Aristotle's own further remarks, Plato appears⁸⁸ to have accepted the two principles of Limit and the Unlimited, and to have called the limiting principle the One, and the material principle by several names indifferently—"the great and the small", "the great-and-small", "the dyad", "the indefinite dyad", "the unequal", and "inequality". He may have thought of Ideal numbers as being, in some rather vague way, determined by the principle of Limit, which gives them their nature and marks them off from the otherwise indefinite continuum that numbers seem to present. Ideal magnitudes will have been generated in the same way. In the *Philebus*, a semblance of order is brought into the sensible universe by the application of a numerical or quantitative principle of Limit to the Unlimited which is "in a sense, a 'many'".⁸⁹ Lastly, Plato may even have identified all Ideas with generated numbers; but this is a development which nowhere appears in the dialogues, and would belong to the very last years of his life. It will be discussed at the conclusion of the last chapter of this book.

Thus Plato reached his theory of Ideas. It was clear that there could only be knowledge of what really existed, and the next step was to work out a theory of knowledge, a theory to explain how knowledge of these all-important realities could be obtained. We have already seen that he believed that the knowledge which we once had, before

our birth, was recoverable by recollection, and that the recovery of one piece of knowledge could lead, through mental associations, to recovery of the rest. The method by which such "recollection" could be achieved he called dialectic, which is a procedure that was suggested by Socrates' method of question and answer. It is a special kind of conversation carried on between the "leader" of the discussion and his respondent, and its object is to work-back by logical analysis to first principles; it proceeds from consideration of species backwards to recognition of the genus, and then from genera back to higher entities still, so far as reason can go, until by the agency of intuition there may come, in the final stage, a sudden flash of understanding, with the recognition of the Idea of the Good itself, the final and ultimate premiss on which the meaning and validity of all our assumptions depend. Knowledge of this ultimate Idea will make possible a reverse process, a logical synthesis, showing how conclusions follow naturally upon one another. These processes of analysis and synthesis are known respectively as Collection and Division. They make possible a synoptic view of the whole realm of Being; without them there could be no assurance that our conclusions are correct, for, as we have seen in the *Meno*,⁹⁰ such knowledge alone can "bind our understanding fast" with comprehension of causes.

Comprehension of an Idea must result, no doubt, from a previous "collection" of sensible particulars,⁹¹ but when in our reasoning we discuss species and genera we are referring always to Ideas, and the discussion will make plain their interrelationship with one another, and ultimately the dependence of all upon the Idea of the Good. Unaided reasoning "treats its assumptions, not as first principles, but as *hypotheses* in the literal sense, things 'laid down' like a flight of steps up which it may mount all the way to something that is not hypothetical, the first principle of all; and

having grasped this may turn back and, holding on to the consequences which depend upon it, descend at last to a conclusion, never making use of any sensible object, but only of Forms,* moving through Forms from one to another, and ending with Forms".⁹² Even here we can see an analogy with the Pythagorean analysis of numbers back to the primary Monad, and the logical synthesis that followed, although the status of the Ideas was of course a conception peculiar to Plato, and the system of question and answer was undoubtedly suggested by Socrates' example.

However far we may be prepared to go in accepting the doctrines criticized by Aristotle as Plato's own, there can be no doubt that Aristotle's summing-up of the influences that worked upon Plato is fundamentally true. "The system of Plato", he says, "in most respects accorded with that of the Pythagoreans, but contained also certain peculiar features. In his youth Plato first became acquainted with Cratylus and the Heraclitean doctrines—that the whole sensible world is always in a state of flux, and that there is no scientific knowledge of it—and in after years he still held these opinions. And when Socrates, disregarding the physical universe and confining his study to moral questions, sought in this sphere for the universal and was the first to concentrate upon definition, Plato followed him and assumed that the problem of definition is concerned not with any sensible thing but with entities of another kind; for the reason that there can be no general definition of sensible things which are always changing. These entities he called 'Ideas'."⁹³

* i.e. Ideas. There is no real distinction between the terms.

CHAPTER III

SYMPOSIUM, PHÆDO, REPUBLIC, PHÆDRUS

IT is very probable that the *Symposium* is earlier than the *Phædo*, and if that is so it can claim the distinction of being the first dialogue to contain mention of the new theory of Ideas. The *Symposium* can be dated with a high degree of probability as belonging to the year 385 B.C., in view of the mention of the recent partition of Mantinea; and this dialogue, written when Plato was about forty-two, is æsthetically perhaps our author's greatest achievement. It may seem rash to make such a statement of him who could contrive the setting of the *Phædrus*, or the famous discussion in the *Phædo*, or many other passages of great dramatic skill, but this dialogue is so carefully constructed as a whole, so perfectly balanced, and reaches such heights of sublime beauty in poetic imagination, that it probably deserves the palm.

Our purpose, however, is not to consider this work from the æsthetic point of view, however tempting; that would occupy a book by itself. We have now to consider its philosophical importance, and such external influences as contributed to its construction. The setting is a dinner-party given by the tragic poet Agathon on the occasion of his first victory with a tragedy. After dinner one of the guests suggests that they should dismiss the dancers, and each in turn make a speech on the subject of Love. The suggestion is accepted, and the first two speeches are made by Phædrus and Pausanias. These are on rather ordinary lines: Love is the inspiration of all honourable achievement,

and of all self-sacrifice; there is the distinction, as Pausanias points out, between "heavenly" and "secular" love, between aspiration and lust, the former expressing itself in its highest form in true friendship. There is an interlude, during which Aristophanes has the hiccups, followed by a speech with a Pythagorean tinge from Eryximachus, in which he declares that one kind of love creates harmony, the other discord. Next Aristophanes, recovered from his hiccups, produces an astonishing sort of allegory to account for the origin of love, maintaining that in prehistoric times the inhabitants of the world were sliced in half for rebelling against Zeus, and that love is the yearning of a creature for the lost half. After some general conversation the host, Agathon, delivers a speech of considerable literary merit, though rather lacking, perhaps, in depth of thought, and his eloquence wins the applause of the assembled company.

Socrates' turn comes next. After some preliminary questioning of Agathon, he proceeds to recount what was told him, he says, by Diotima, a wise woman of Mantinea. Eros is a mean between opposites, between beauty and ugliness, goodness and badness; he is neither god nor mortal, but a spirit; he is the son of Plenty and of Poverty, and is responsible for our desire of everlasting possession of what is good. This desire fulfils itself by means of generation, not only physical, but psychical as well: and the medium of generation in either case is beauty. Physical generation is man's nearest approach to immortality. But the creative instinct has other outlets too: the beauty of fame is the medium for generation of laws or invention, the beauty of goodness for the generation of noble deeds.

But these are only the lesser mysteries of love. We should begin by admiring beauty in one of its earthly forms; then recognition of the fact that beauty in one form is akin to beauty in another will lead to love of beauty in all its forms, and gradually to an awareness that beauty of the mind is of

a higher and nobler order than outward appearance; beauty in any form may inspire in us beautiful thoughts, but as we proceed to the higher forms of beauty, the beauty of truth as revealed by the sciences, love of wisdom will create in us thoughts higher and nobler still; until finally we catch a glimpse of the highest form of knowledge, knowledge of Beauty itself. "This is the correct way of approach or of instruction in the matter of love, to begin with the manifestations of beauty here on earth, and to mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these manifestations as stepping-stones, from one going on to two and from two to all appearances of bodily beauty, and from bodily beauty to beautiful lives, and from lives to the beauty of knowledge; and finally from these studies to come to that knowledge which is of absolute Beauty, and to learn the nature of Beauty in itself Seeing Beauty in the way in which it is perceptible, he will be able by this means, and by no other, to show not a mere likeness of virtue, since he has nothing to do with likenesses now, but real virtue . . . and bringing into being and nurturing true virtue he will become beloved of the gods, and immortal if any man can be."⁹⁴

Here, then, we have described to us the emotional, as opposed to the intellectual, approach to a knowledge of goodness. If our natures are good and properly trained, from attraction to physical beauty we ascend to a love of Beauty Itself; for from perception of a beautiful object springs, through intuition, awareness of the existence of the higher entity, and instinctively we like and admire it more. This approach is not altogether distinct from the intellectual approach, as the insistence upon the importance of the various branches of knowledge shows, but the emphasis here is on the emotions and on instinctive intuition. Our senses can remind us of higher things. This dialogue serves to counterbalance what may appear to be an almost ascetic intellectualism contained in the *Phædo*.

The ultimate object of our search should be the Idea of Goodness (which, in one aspect, is the Idea of Beauty), since only when this is apprehended can true well-being or Happiness be attained. The process is essentially an upward striving of the soul, and it affords a curious contrast to the sudden downpouring of the Spirit that occurred at St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Few can attain to Plato's ideal state of blessedness: for that is required not a childlike faith, but, as we shall see in the *Republic*, a host of intellectual and natural qualities to make possible the acquisition of knowledge.

Lastly, to conclude our account of the dialogue, Alcibiades arrives, drunk. He is the popular hero of the moment, due to sail shortly as commander of the great Athenian armament on its fateful expedition to Sicily. He is prevailed upon to make a speech; and in this speech, an encomium of Socrates, we must surely recognize a further reply to the charges recently brought by Polycrates concerning Socrates' influence on his "pupils". Polycrates' pamphlet, as we have seen, was only published two or three years before this, and had contained, according to Isocrates,⁹³ the first public assertion that Alcibiades had been a disciple of Socrates; and the *Gorgias* had only contained a hint of the real answer to the charge. In the speech we are now considering Alcibiades makes it clear that he had been the active party in trying every possible means of inducing Socrates to impart to him some of his wisdom. It is implied that Socrates gave no instruction (we know, of course, from the *Apology*, that he claimed never to have had a pupil); and as for Socrates' personal example, he was a model of self-control, endurance, and patriotism. Alcibiades is the man of popular virtues who, corrupted by the blandishments of the people, found pleasure perhaps, but never happiness. This he virtually admits, by his manner if not by his words, in the passage before us now.

Some left, some fell asleep, but Socrates continued a discussion with Agathon and Aristophanes until dawn broke, then went his way, had a bath, and started the next day as though he had slept all night.

We now turn to the *Phædo*. This purports to be an account of a discussion that took place just before Socrates' death; but the remark that Plato was ill at the time may be a hint or a reminder that the dialogue does not pretend to give a historical account of a real conversation. Certainly the subject-matter is un-Socratic, for the Theory of Recollection and the Theory of Ideas with which it deals involve metaphysical speculation out of keeping with what Aristotle explicitly tells us of the interests of the historical Socrates;⁹⁶ and the theory of the immortality of the soul, which is a main feature of the dialogue, is incompatible with Socrates' agnosticism on the subject which we find in the *Apology*.⁹⁷

The secondary title of the *Phædo* is *On the Soul*, and the chief subject of the dialogue is immortality; even though Socrates seems to have held that knowledge in such matters is impossible, it was not unnatural for Plato, using a literary form in which invention was essential and historical accuracy was neither required nor expected, to choose Socrates' last hours as the setting for such a discussion. Socrates hopes that his friend Euenus will follow him as soon as possible, but not of course by taking his own life; he explains this paradox by referring to the Orphic theory that we are in custody here on earth, and must not try to escape: "It seems probable", he says,⁹⁸ "that the gods watch over us, and that we belong to the gods." As we do not belong to ourselves, it is not for us to take our own lives. There is a reference⁹⁹ to the Pythagorean philosopher Philolaus, which suggests that the Pythagoreans held similar beliefs. There is a good deal of Pythagoreanism, as we have seen, in the theories which are to be discussed, and as the main purpose

here is to infer the soul's immortality from assumptions that are borrowed from or closely akin to Pythagorean beliefs, Plato chooses Simmias and Cebes, who are represented as having had acquaintance with these beliefs, as Socrates' respondents. The philosopher's whole life is determined by his thoughts and hopes of death; for death means the separation of the soul from the body, and so long as it is in union with the body the soul cannot have perfect freedom to engage in contemplation of truth and enjoyment of that knowledge which alone can bring happiness. It is thwarted by the senses and by the appetites, and by bodily weaknesses. But the philosopher will, so far as is possible, disregard these sources of hindrance and concentrate on "tendance of the soul" in preparation for the great release of death. The balancing of pleasure against pain is not virtue—here we have another refutation of the doctrine discussed at the end of the *Protagoras*—such currency is counterfeit; knowledge of right and wrong is what is wanted, and virtue is the purification of the soul.

Sanction for this belief is found in the theory that the soul is immortal, and arguments are brought forward to substantiate the theory. Opposites go in pairs: increase in one direction implies decrease in another; therefore the passage from life to death which we constantly witness must imply that there is also a passage from death to life. Again, since "nothing can come out of nothing", according to the physicists, the "stock", as it were, of souls in another world must be constantly replenished, or life on earth would come to an end.

It has been pointed out¹⁰⁰ that various conclusions other than immortality could be drawn from the argument: that the supply of soul is inexhaustible, that each soul is created by a Creator, or that life on earth will, in fact, one day come to an end. Again, this argument would imply nothing concerning the state of the soul in another world, neither

individuality nor even consciousness. But the "main proof" is yet to come.

Cebes now explains the theory of Recollection, citing as evidence our notions of perfect equality and the like, and the fact that knowledge of these realities must have been lost at birth, since knowledge should imply an ability to give an account of the thing known. The Idea, then, must be distinct from sensible objects, unchanging and permanent. Hence it may be said that the theory of the pre-existence of our souls and the theory of Ideas are mutually interdependent; the one stands or falls with the other.

It is to be noted that the Greek word which we have here translated "soul" had for the layman of fifth- and fourth-century Athens none of the associations which are connected with our use of that term; it meant no more than "the principle of life"; but the Pythagoreans, believing in some form of existence after death, and in the importance, in view of that later existence, of "purification", gave the word a more colourful meaning. The soul becomes the essential part of man, to be purified in preparation for its life when separated from the body in which it is residing for a while. Plato extends its significance still further, and we find that the soul is that part of man which can apprehend the Ideas. It bridges the gap between the transitory and unreal world of sense with the eternal, real world of Ideas. In the *Phædo* the soul, in its preoccupation with studying the Ideas, seems to have little to do with this world or with human emotions, but we have the *Symposium* to show that such was not Plato's view. We shall see that the *Republic* eliminates any appearance of inconsistency by explaining that there is a stream of desire which can be canalized, as it were, into any channel we choose. We are not likely to be convinced by any of Plato's "proofs" of the immortality of the soul, and this logical reasoning could not even pretend to prove the survival of personality. That Plato did believe in the

survival of personality is suggested by the myth in the *Gorgias*; and we should remember Plato's conviction that philosophical knowledge cannot be "taught" or transmitted by external proof. The very possibility of finding alternative conclusions to the first part of the argument may indicate that these proofs were intended to be little more than logical exercises. The main "proof", depending on the Recollection of Ideas, he undoubtedly held to be sound, although its verification would depend upon our separate and individual discovery of truth; but some things, such as the survival of personality, are incapable of any kind of verbal proof, and can only be suggested in the form of a "likely story". That Plato's faith went deeper than analysis of his arguments would seem to reveal is indicated in the latter part of the *Phædo*.

Socrates sees that his hearers are not fully convinced. They must find another to convince them, when he is gone: "Greece is wide and contains many good men, and there are many races of barbarians, and among all of these you must make full inquiry in your search for such a charmer, sparing neither money nor effort, for there is no more vital purpose on which to spend your money. And you must search too among yourselves; for perhaps it would not be easy to find anyone more capable of doing this work than you yourselves."¹⁰¹ "Everything must be done", he says later, "to bring virtue and knowledge into your lives; for great is the reward, and great the hope."¹⁰² We should probably be right in seeing here a suggestion that each one should seek truth within himself, by means of Recollection.

It would seem, says Socrates, that soul, which is invisible, and can apprehend Ideas, and is moreover the part in man which governs, must be akin to the unchanging world of Ideas rather than to the changing world of sensible phenomena. If it has been over-much contaminated by the body, it is not free after our death, but must transmigrate into

animal bodies, whereas if it has been kept as pure as possible, it can ultimately depart to the company of the gods. This transmigration of souls, another Orphic-Pythagorean doctrine, is here explicitly brought in, although only perhaps as a plausible theory, to account for the need of purification.

Simmias regrets the absence of any divine revelation. It is difficult to imagine what our own ideas might be if Christ had never lived, if there were no Bible, and if we were uninfluenced by such other "revealed" religions as we are now acquainted with; and it is all the more astonishing to see the lengths to which Plato showed that unaided reasoning could go. Despite his regrets, Simmias is prepared to pursue a logical inquiry, and presents an objection to Socrates' theories: a harmony has all the qualities which have been attributed to the soul; it is beautiful, invisible, and immaterial; perhaps the soul, as some affirm, is a sort of harmony, and may depart at death like the dying strains of a lyre. This view of the soul, incompatible indeed with the theory of transmigration, appears to have been held by some later Pythagoreans, including probably Philolaus, the teacher of Simmias and Cebes, and must be connected with the view of the medical school of Alcmaeon that health is a harmony of elements within the body: the "principle of life" might well be so defined on such a view. But Socrates points out that while there can be degrees of harmony, there cannot be degrees of soul; again, on Simmias' assumption virtue would be a harmony within a harmony, which, on the same assumption, should imply the presence of *more soul*; but that is absurd, so that soul cannot be called a harmony.

We should observe that Socrates prefaces his reply with the observation that a bad argument should not be allowed to invalidate a sound theory. Here he is referring to the argument from opposites, and this is another clear indication that we are to attach very little weight to such "proofs".

We should notice, too, the hint that virtue may be regarded as a harmony. There was a suggestion of this in the *Gorgias*, and the view finds full expression in the *Republic* with the working out of the doctrine of the tripartite soul.

Cebes too has an objection: "even if we admit the antenatal existence of the soul, there seems to be insufficient evidence that any one soul will exist for ever. In answering this objection Socrates begins with a full exposition of the theory of Ideas. He tells how he lost interest in the speculations of the physicists; Anaxagoras' treatment of his principle of Mind might be compared to the attitude of one who should say that Socrates had intelligence, and then declare that he was remaining in prison and not escaping merely because of the way in which his limbs were functioning, instead of giving the true reason, that he believed it best that it should be so; hence he turned in his search for truth to definitions. Here follows an account of the Ideas, which sensible particulars resemble through "participation, indwelling, communion, or whatever you like to call it". Such Ideas afford the only true causes; you proceed to higher and higher generalizations, from one Idea to another, until you reach a satisfactory explanation. Here we have an early suggestion of the dialectical process. Now two opposite Ideas can coexist in one person or particular sensible object, but they cannot *combine*, either in the world of reality or in the sensible particulars in which they manifest themselves. Again, some Ideas, while not themselves "opposites", cannot combine with other Ideas of an incompatible significance: the Idea of Three excludes the Idea of Even. Hence soul, which contains the principle of life, cannot combine with death. The last part of the argument contains an obvious flaw: for Socrates goes on to admit that "threeness" must not merely depart, but perish at the approach of evenness, and yet declares that soul cannot perish at the approach of death; soul, he says, contains the principle of

life, which will not admit death and is therefore indestructible. It seems hard to believe that Plato was not aware that he was here begging the question, and it is more likely that we have an indication, similar to the one implicit in the admittedly unsatisfactory argument from opposites, that no proof of immortality is possible that does not take into account the theory of Ideas: the two theories, the two "pillars of Platonism" as they have been called, are interdependent.

There follows an elaborate myth, into the details of which we need not go, setting forth the fate of souls after death: how they are judged, and how the very good enjoy perfect bliss, the very wicked are cast into Tartarus for ever, and the rest remain in the underworld until they are suitably cleansed of sin. The last part of the dialogue describes the last moments of Socrates' life, with his assurance that his friends need not worry about his burial; they can bury him how they please, "if they can catch him".

Next to the *Laws*, the *Republic* is by far the longest of Plato's works. It is unnecessary to go into any detail here, as we are concerned only with the main principles of Platonism, and the main influences that affected Plato's thought. We will therefore content ourselves with consideration of certain features of this great work. It may be said by way of preface that several critics believe that Book I was written at a comparatively early date, and that Books VI and VII may well have been written later than all the rest, except perhaps Book X.

The subject of the dialogue, announced at the beginning of Book I, is the nature of justice; but since justice must be the same wherever it is found, it is decided to consider justice as it exists in society, in order to see it "writ large", as it were. This decision leads to an analysis of society into its component parts—or rather a synthesis, for we are given

a description of the way in which a society might have begun, its parts accumulating according to the order of logical necessity. After the minimum needs of livelihood have been provided, there will come a desire for luxuries, and then an army will be required for protection of the state. These "Guardians" will require a philosophic nature, if they are to be fierce in time of war, but temperate and friendly to their fellow-countrymen; but another kind of Guardian will also be needed, to rule the country, and these ruling Guardians must be very carefully selected and trained if the country is to be governed in accordance with justice. At this point, in Book IV, justice is defined. Of the four cardinal virtues, wisdom is found to reside in the rulers, courage in the soldiers, temperance in the harmonious working of higher and lower orders of society; and justice will consist in the performance by all citizens and classes of their proper functions in the state. In the individual, the soul has three divisions comparable to the three divisions of society, for it contains reason, passion, and desire: reason will correspond to the Guardians; spirit or passion to the army; and desires to the traders and artisans. Socrates is about to discuss unjust constitutions when he is met by three "waves": the questions of the position of women, of family life, and of the possibility of bringing the whole scheme into existence. The answer to this last question is that the scheme could come into operation if a philosopher-king could be found, and Books VI and VII describe the true philosopher, the knowledge that he must possess, and the education that will be required for the attainment of such knowledge. Then we are told, in Book VIII, how the ideal aristocracy could decline or degenerate into timocracy, into oligarchy, into democracy, and finally into tyranny; and then, in Book IX, how the just man will always be happier than the unjust. Book X begins with a parenthetical discussion of the arts, confirming earlier decisions in the

light of later conclusions; and the discussion ends with a statement of the rewards of virtue, involving a proof of immortality, and finally a myth to support the argument.

Such in outline is the subject-matter of the *Republic*: after the preliminary discussion of Book I Plato considers the good state and the just man; then we have the important central section of Books V-VII containing the metaphysical and epistemological doctrine on which the whole system depends; then consideration of the corrupt state and the unjust man, and finally the epilogue contained in Book X. It will be useful to clear away certain misconceptions that stand in the way of a correct understanding of the dialogue.

Some readers have considered that Plato is making a false analogy when he compares the three parts of the soul to the three classes in the state, and that he should not have argued from the make-up of the individual to the make-up of society. But in fact Plato does not argue from the one to the other, and it has even been maintained¹⁰³ that the threefold division of society was a conception that he held before he reached the theory of the tripartite soul. There can be little doubt that his division of society was at least prompted by the Pythagorean notion of three ways of life, the Apolautic, the Practical, and the Theoretic, which correspond to those at the Olympic Games who come to buy and sell, those who come to compete, and those who come to watch: the contemplative life, the life of the philosopher, provides the best method of "purification". The division of the soul, on the other hand, suggested itself to Plato as a result of his experience, which showed that there was a conflict within the soul. Having arrived at the two divisions independently, he was interested to note that they were similar; the one may have seemed to furnish confirmation of the other; and in the *Republic*, so as to explain his meaning clearly, he produces an elaborate simile. The just individual and the good state are considered separately, and

it is found that in both there is a division of functions among parts; this enables Plato to define justice as the fulfilment by all parts of their own particular functions. It so happens that the two divisions correspond with one another.

We have already remarked that Plato's development in ethical theory may appear to show a change-over from the identification of Virtue with Knowledge to its identification with a harmony of parts within the soul; and the diversity of the special virtues within the unity of the harmony is worked out to the fullest possible extent in the *Republic*. But there is no real break with earlier theory. "Virtue is Knowledge" is hardly an equation of identity; it means that virtue *depends* upon knowledge; and in the *Republic* wisdom is still the ruling element within the soul. It is responsible for informing the whole organism wherein right conduct consists. Emphasis on the notion of harmony is due, of course, to Pythagorean influence; there is development, and there is a change that may be described as one of approach, or as verbal. But there is no change in fundamental doctrine.

We may also remark that the conception of a tripartite soul may appear to raise a difficulty about the soul's immortality. We are told that there are within the soul reason, passion, and desire. Reason alone is the moral guide, reason alone has the cognitive function of apprehending the Ideas; reason alone is akin to the divine, and only the soul's intellectual part, we learn from the *Timæus*, is immortal. The myth in the *Timæus* explains that our souls are made up of elements taken from both worlds, the real and the unreal. The fact is that Plato's development in his notion of the soul runs parallel to his development in his conception of virtue, and that to account for moral conflict, for the part played in our lives by emotion or passion and by desire, he spoke of three parts within the soul; but the soul is essentially one remains true. Socrates' speech in the *Symposium* makes

it clear that it is within our power to direct the streams of desire and of emotion into the channel of reason, and thereby to leave the whole soul pure and unalloyed. We must not take the language of the myth in the *Timæus* too literally, or press its implications too far.

Another misconception,¹⁰⁴ that Plato proposed to substitute for democracy "an aristocracy in which a hereditary caste of cultured gentlemen care with paternal solicitude for the toiling masses", has been refuted by Professor Cornford. The Guardians were not a hereditary caste. Plato suggests in a well-known fable that the Guardians have, as it were, gold inside them, the soldiers or auxiliaries have silver, and the farmers and craftsmen iron or brass. "Now, since you are all of one stock, although your children will generally be like their parents, sometimes a golden parent may have a silver child or a silver parent a golden one, and so on with all other combinations. So the first and chief injunction laid by heaven upon the Rulers is that, of all the things of which they must show themselves good guardians, there is none that needs to be so carefully watched as the mixture of metals in the souls of the children. If a child of their own is born with an alloy of iron or brass, they must, without the smallest pity, assign him the station proper to his nature and thrust him out among the craftsmen or the farmers. If, on the contrary, these classes produce a child with gold or silver in his composition, they will promote him, according to his value, to be a Guardian or an auxiliary."¹⁰⁵ Plato is constructing a state that "will be happy as a whole, not trying to secure the well-being of a select few";¹⁰⁶ on the principle that "friends have all things in common" the Guardians will have no private property at all; and "gold and silver, we shall tell them, they will not need, having the divine counterparts of those metals always in their souls as a god-given possession, whose purity it is not lawful to sully by the acquisition of that mortal dross,"

current among mankind, which has been the occasion of so many unholy deeds";¹⁰⁷ but the "toiling masses", as Mr. Crossman calls them, are not to be denied these privileges, although extreme wealth, as well as extreme poverty, are to be carefully avoided. Plato was particularly anxious not to create what Disraeli called "two nations", a society, as Socrates says, which is "not one, but two at least, at enmity with one another, one of the rich, the other of the poor".¹⁰⁸ Nor, again, will Plato's system of education "poison the minds of the people by dissemination of calculated lies", as Professor Thomson¹⁰⁹ supposes. The Guardians, being possessed of Knowledge, will be able to communicate True Opinion to the people; this is in conformity with the doctrine of the *Meno*. Those who do not themselves possess knowledge will behave in accordance with the scheme of the universe and therefore be happiest if they act on the advice of another who possesses it; and if a Guardian should "find himself compelled to mould other characters besides his own and to shape the pattern of public and private life into conformity with his vision of the ideal, he will not lack the skill to produce such counterparts of temperance, justice and all the virtues as can exist in the ordinary man".¹¹⁰ For this reason the Guardians will be justified in censoring literature and art, and in using allegory or fable to achieve their ends. The real "lie", the "lie in the soul",¹¹¹ is ignorance or misconception of truth; and this the Guardians will seek to eliminate.

Another objection sometimes made is the apparent impossibility of ever finding Guardians capable of managing a state in the way that Plato describes. Plato was well aware of the difficulty. In the first place, one who is to be a Guardian must have a suitable nature. He must be free from blemishes of character which would make his desires and his emotions triumph over his reason, and be endowed with abilities of a high order that will enable him to learn and to

obtain wisdom. He has to be capable of undertaking with success the vast programme of studies outlined in Book VII. Plato is under no illusion that the state he is describing is anything but an ideal; later, in the *Statesman*, he suggests a practical compromise for this imperfect world, and in the *Laws* elaborates the suggestion in considerable detail; but that is not his present purpose. He is knowingly sketching the ideal, because only when the ideal has been comprehended can any approximation to it ever be achieved. "Suppose a painter had drawn an ideally beautiful figure complete to the last touch, would you think any the worse of him if he could not show that a person as beautiful as that could exist? . . . We have been constructing in discourse the pattern of an ideal state. Is our theory any the worse, if we cannot prove it possible that a state so organized should be actually founded? . . . Can theory ever be fully realized in practice? Is it not in the nature of things that action should come less close to truth than thought?"¹¹²

The educational system of the *Republic* certainly gives the appearance of being an "enormous undertaking",¹¹³ and must have appeared formidable to Athenians whose only higher education until the Academy was founded had come from the Sophists and other teachers of rhetoric. After completing their elementary education, and then two or three years' physical and military training, those who are selected as possible candidates for the post of Guardian pursue, between the ages of twenty and thirty, an advanced course in mathematics, when "the detached studies in which they were educated as children will be brought together in a comprehensive view of their connexions with one another and with reality".¹¹⁴ Then, since even astronomy, which is treated as a branch of pure mathematics, is not enough—for "these intricate traceries in the sky are, no doubt, the loveliest and most perfect of material things, but still part of the visible world, and therefore fall far

short of the true realities . . . which can be conceived by reason and thought, but not seen by the eye"¹¹⁵—the years from thirty to thirty-five are devoted to dialectic; and when these intellectual studies have been completed, fifteen years must be spent in public life, in the holding of a minor office, for experience of men, before the duties of a Guardian may at last be undertaken. For prospective Guardians, it would seem, the minimum school-leaving age was thirty-five; and then they might fail on examination.

As true Being differs from the world of Becoming, so does knowledge differ from opinion; and in the attainment of knowledge the most important of studies is dialectic. We have already discussed this method of working back from species to genera, from Idea to higher Idea, until the seeker finally reaches the Idea of the Good, which Plato describes as standing to mind and the things of the mind, in the intellectual world, as the sun stands to sight and the things of sight in the visible world. It is generally believed that the curriculum outlined in Book VII was the programme of studies actually used at the Academy, and at least we know for certain that dialectic was practised there. There is a fragment of the comic poet Epicrates¹¹⁶ which parodies the method: "In the Academy I heard a discussion weird and strange. They kept defining natural objects, distinguishing the genera of living creatures, kinds of trees and classes of vegetables; and then meanwhile they kept on asking, 'Of what genus is a gourd?'" No doubt biological studies played an important part in the work of the Academy, and Aristotle must have learnt much of his biology there. It is, incidentally, a tribute to Plato's educational methods as well as to his personality that Aristotle, a man of a very different mould and outlook, should have gone to the Academy at the age of seventeen and stayed for twenty years.

We cannot go into any of the many details discussed in

the *Republic*. Plato was certainly not afraid to suggest drastic innovations, and the inclusion of women as possible candidates for the office of Guardian was one such suggestion. His aversion to democracy will not cause much surprise when we remember the travesty of democratic government that he had witnessed in early manhood; he had no high opinion even of the great statesmen of the fifth century, because in his view they had failed to improve the moral life of the country. Even they had lacked knowledge, and "the multitude can never be philosophical".¹¹⁷ As to Plato's treatment of literature and the arts, we may say that he sets aside all that will not be conducive to the attainment of truth, and banishes all that would be a hindrance to its study. Already in the *Protagoras* he had attacked the form of superstitious idolatry that saw in the poets revelation of moral and religious truth; and certainly many of the stories contained in their poetry were not conducive to a lofty view of religion or even to admiration of the gods. Painting, poetry, sculpture, and even music are representations of things on earth which are themselves but likenesses of true Being, and are therefore twice removed from reality, whereas the rest of the sensible world, other than the products of these imitative arts, is removed but once. The story goes¹¹⁸ that Plato himself wrote poetry in his youth, and burnt a tragedy he had written after listening to Socrates. There is no doubt that Plato had what we might call a poetic soul, as the *Symposium* and many other of his writings bear witness; he would have been the last to deny the value of beauty. Emotion could help in the attainment of knowledge; intuition was required as well as intellect even in the dialectical process; and in the *Phædrus* Plato allows that the ecstasy of the soul when it recognizes beauty is comparable to the divine madness of the poet or the seer. The philosopher, too, is inspired; but *his* pronouncements are supported and confirmed by reason. Philosopher and poet are no longer

one; the "long-standing quarrel"¹¹⁹ between poetry and philosophy remained, and in that quarrel Plato unhesitatingly took his stand on the side of philosophy. Preferring not to risk misuse of poetical gifts, he confined himself to such methods of reaching truth as seemed more reliable.

The further "proof" of the soul's immortality adduced at the end of the *Republic* is that while most things can be destroyed by the evils which are opposed to their particular nature, the soul's particular evil, which is vice, does not destroy the soul; yet this, if anything, might be expected to destroy it. If the soul is immortal, it is possible to believe in reward and punishment after death, while the sufferings of the righteous in this world may be due to their sins in a former earthly life. This theory is then embellished and confirmed by a myth, of which a great many features are Orphic in origin. The myth takes the form of a story told by Er of Pamphylia, who was killed in battle, but came back to life ten days later and recounted all that he had seen in the other world. He had been allowed to come back in order to warn mankind of the judgment to come; and now he tells how he saw souls going off to torture or to bliss, according to the judgment; others again were on their way back, and rested for a while from their journey in the meadow where he watched. Those which were to return to earth had to choose the life they were to be given, and each chose according to the wisdom it possessed. Souls that had resided in men whose goodness had depended on habit and not on knowledge would often choose a life of foolish pleasure, but those which had been chastened by suffering might choose more wisely. In the best position to choose wisely were such as had cultivated knowledge in their previous life on earth; but in every case "the blame is his who chooses; Heaven is blameless".¹²⁰ Before return to earth the water of Lethe, the stream of forgetfulness, had to be drunk. Hence the need of recollection.

The cycle of lives in this world and the next, the judgment after death, the meadow, the stream of forgetfulness, all are Orphic. We are told that sins have to be expiated ten times over, once in every hundred years, so that the intervals between lives on earth were all of a thousand years. This too was probably an Orphic belief. The Orphics hoped for ultimate "release" from reincarnation, when the soul, owing to its kinship with the divine, would become a god. Plato too believed in such kinship, and we may conclude from the *Phædrus* myth that he considered such hopes to be at least not unreasonable.

A feature of the present myth is that souls before birth are shown a vision of the structure of the universe, which is described in allegorical or symbolic detail that is at least in some respects Pythagorean. We cannot assign the *Republic* to any exact dates. All we can say is that most of it must have been written between Plato's first two visits to Syracuse in 387 and 367 B.C.; and it would appear that some time during the latter half of this period the *Phædrus* was composed.

It has been asserted¹²¹ that the *Phædrus* "must be considered primarily as a direct and comprehensive attack on the educational system of Isocrates", and this would appear to be the best explanation of this work, which is rather different in character from most of the dialogues. At the same time a corollary of the attack on Isocrates is a further justification of Plato's own doctrine, much as the *Gorgias* had been. We will merely notice some of the more important of the points that are made.

On the bank of the stream of Ilissus, at a spot sacred to the nymphs, where the trees round about are in full blossom and cicadas sing on the branches overhead, Socrates induces his young friend Phædrus to read a discourse of Lysias on the subject of love which Phædrus says has much impressed him. Socrates expresses surprise that he is expected to

admire the speech for anything but the rhetorical tricks that it contains, such devices as we know Isocrates to have rated highly. Socrates then proposes to try to make a speech on the same subject that will be better, but objects to the condition that all the points he makes must be new and original. This must be an allusion to the *Helen*, in which Isocrates had imposed this condition upon himself; the suggestion is that Isocrates failed to distinguish between two kinds of merit, originality in presentation and treatment, and originality of thought. Socrates makes a speech similar in sentiment to that of Lysias, but hesitates to take it to its final conclusion, and soon after has a warning from his Sign that he must not go yet. By way of recantation, as the warning must mean that Ercs has been displeased at blasphemy, he makes another speech leading to the opposite conclusion, and this time love is defined. All this must certainly be an attack on Isocrates' method of literary criticism as exemplified in the *Helen* and the *Busiris*, where Isocrates' way of criticizing the discourses of others is to produce a "fair copy". In the *Phædrus* Socrates shows that no "fair copy" in the sense of a good discourse can be given on a theme that is immoral or unsound. That Plato is thinking particularly of the *Helen* is shown by mention of Stesichorus' "blasphemy" against Helen; for Stesichorus' blasphemy had consisted in accepting the usual tradition about her, and the suggestion now is that Isocrates, who had done the same, was guilty of similar blasphemy.

There are many other indications that Isocrates is being attacked, and at the end of the dialogue he is mentioned by name, when Plato, meting out "the most comprehensive damnation with the faintest possible praise", as Mr. Howland puts it, makes Socrates allow that "by nature the man has in him an inkling of philosophy".¹²² There is no doubt particular reference throughout the attack to Isocrates' *Helen*, which, as we have remarked earlier on, is itself probably

directed against Plato, and in particular against the *Protagoras*. Fundamentally the difference between the two points of view lies in Isocrates' belief that "it is far better to hold a reasonable opinion upon useful matters than to have exact knowledge of matters that are useless",¹²³ and Plato's conviction that, unless there be divine intervention, knowledge alone can give meaning and value to anything that we do. All kinds of discourse are alike in this, that all require knowledge; and the only important technical qualification for an orator is ability to adapt a discourse to the audience for which it is intended. This requires study of psychology, based ultimately again upon the same knowledge of the Idea of the Good. The art of writing, indeed, has done a great deal of harm, because we use our memories less than we otherwise should, and depending upon the written word we soon become forgetful. The words of a written discourse "when questioned about what they have to teach, simply say the same thing over and over again";¹²⁴ they cannot be examined as dialectic would require because of the absence of the writer, and though they may give us the illusion or the appearance of wisdom, they can never make us wise. Undoubtedly Plato regarded his own written works, no less than those of others, as but the outcome of an agreeable pastime, of no serious value. The very most that a written work can do is to remind us of such knowledge as we have already recovered by recollection, but have since forgotten again through old age or infirmity. This doctrine was to be repeated and further explained in the *Seventh Letter*.

The main proof that a sound discourse cannot be made upon an unsound theme appears in the discussion that follows Socrates' second speech. If we *define* our terms correctly, there can be no mistaking a false argument for a sound one. This leads to a brief reference to dialectic. First the inquirer makes a "collection" of instances of

similar sensible objects, from which he may come to comprehend an Idea that they all represent. He then proceeds to divide this generic Idea into species, working his way down to the particular specific Idea that has to be defined; and he will now be able to define it in terms of its genus and of its specific differences from other kindred Ideas, with full understanding of its true nature. This is the only method of reaching a sound definition, and in the present dialogue Socrates has used it to reach a definition of love.

Socrates' second speech contains a long myth to show that love is a heaven-sent gift, bestowed for the good of man. It begins with a "proof" that the soul is immortal and indestructible, and again we have to remember that "soul" is primarily regarded as the "principle of life". Soul is ever in motion, and the cause of all other movement. It is self-moved, and therefore uncreate and indestructible. Aristotle improved on this argument by speaking of an "unmoved" mover, and in that form it has long been regarded as one of the best confirmatory evidences of a divine origin of the world.

In this myth the soul is likened to a charioteer with two horses. The charioteer represents reason, and the two horses desire and emotion; and in the other world the chariots of the gods drive smoothly, but the chariots of souls still tainted with the contamination of this world go this way and that, the horses pulling in different directions. The chariot of the soul is winged, but if one horse has not been properly trained the chariot cannot rise aloft to the region beyond the heavens, which is the natural object of the charioteer's desire; for there he may behold eternal essence, the realm of Ideas themselves. Some obtain a glimpse, others never rise above the surface to obtain the longed-for vision. These must return unsuccessful, and feed upon opinion; they will be less able to recollect true Being, for their memory of it must be recalled from a vision obtained

a long time ago. The conception is that the souls of men are souls that fell from a state of divine bliss, and that ten periods of incarnation in mortal frame are necessary for the recovery, as it were, of wings. After each incarnation the remainder of a millennium must be spent elsewhere, when punishment or happiness ensues according to the life that has been led; and each time the soul chooses its next form of incarnation, which may be into a beast or a man of any kind, as also in the *Republic*; but a soul that has never seen the truth cannot enter a human body.

Only the soul of a true philosopher or lover can escape from the cycle in a period shorter than ten thousand years. This may happen after three successive incarnations have been spent in the pursuit of goodness and beauty and the recollection of truth. As in the *Symposium*, we are told that contemplation of beautiful things on earth can help us to remember Beauty Itself; our wings begin to grow; and a final return to the state of blessedness from which we fell remains, as for the Orphics, the innermost hope of our real selves, the only true object of man's desire.

Some features of the myths of the *Phædrus* and *Republic* X suggest Oriental influence. Eudoxus of Cnidus, a pupil of Archytas, came to the Academy about 370 B.C., and seems to have stimulated there an interest in the East.

THE *PARMENIDES* AND LATER WORKS

IN the dialogues with which we have dealt in the preceding chapter Plato presents the answer that he had sought to the problem of reconciling Socrates' beliefs with the views of the Ionian physicists. He has admitted the mutability and transience of this world of sense, and thereby accepted the element of truth contained in the Ionian tradition, and he has used Orphic and Pythagorean concepts to account for the permanence of reality elsewhere. He has adduced logical arguments and metaphysical theories of his own to support his belief in what had been for the Pythagoreans and Orphics largely matters of religious faith. But the gulf between the two worlds, the world of Being and the world of appearance, still appeared to many to be as wide as it had seemed to Parmenides. The theory of an immortal soul which through kinship with the divine can have cognizance of the Ideal realm had done something to bridge the gap, but the exact relationship between the two worlds remained obscure. The relationship had been variously described as one of resemblance or participation, but no explanation or proof had been given to show how this could be; so that the ontological status of this world of sense, to which Parmenides had declared that reason could attribute no real existence, remained an acute problem. The Ionians had been answered; to the Eleatics an answer had yet to be given.

There must have been a great deal of discussion in the Academy about the details of the main theory on which Plato's philosophy rested, the theory of Ideas, and no doubt

the difficulties were recognized by Plato himself as well as by others. Some of the chief points at issue are raised in the *Parmenides*, a dialogue written probably not very long before Plato's departure for Sicily in 367 B.C., and fittingly named after the great philosopher whose arguments had yet to be met. Plato and Parmenides agreed, of course, in affirming that only what reason can apprehend can have real existence. The difference between them was that Parmenides accepted only the "One" as an object of reason, and rejected the "many" sensible objects of this world, whereas Plato appeared to assign to this world some sort of share in real being, and moreover admitted diversity within the realm of thought. For Parmenides there could be no degrees of being; and his "One" was homogeneous and unique. Parmenides, then, is represented in this dialogue as accepting the main postulate of the theory of Ideas, that reality exists elsewhere than in the realm of sense, and we shall find that in the *Sophist* also Plato is anxious to claim Parmenides as in this respect his predecessor; but the present discussion implies a questioning of the status that Plato has assigned to the sensible world, and also, perhaps, of the plurality that he has assumed to exist in the world of Ideas.

Socrates states his conviction that there are Ideas of most things, but says that he has been unable to decide whether there can be Ideas of such things as "man", "fire", and "water", and that he cannot deny the apparent absurdity of admitting Ideas of "hair", "mud", and "dirt", and of the host of things that would appear to be too low in the scale of nature to have counterparts in the realm of Being; yet consistency would seem to demand the existence of Ideas of all things alike. To use later terms, logic and metaphysics seemed to be at variance. One of the difficulties in the way of philosophical thought at this time, as we have seen, was contained in the uses of the verb "to be"; what is meant by saying "courage is good"? The Eleatic belief that the

only reality is single and unique implies that to speak of *two* things, courage *and* goodness, is to talk nonsense. The Megarians took delight in using this sort of point for quibbling or eristic argument; and as we have already seen in discussing the *Cratylus*, the Antisthenians also, for other reasons, would admit no predication that was not a statement of identity: for one thing, they said, could have only one "name," and by "names" they meant what we call "adjectives" as well as what we call "nouns". It is clear from the *Phaedo* that Plato had regarded his theory of Ideas as to some extent explaining non-identical predication—Ideas exist corresponding to all the universals recognized by logic, and "courage is good" merely means that courage *partakes* of the Idea of Goodness. This assumes, of course, plurality in the world of Ideas, but it does explain how one thing can have many "names". Now logic would seem to require that the same explanation should hold good of all such statements, including, for example, "mud is dirty". But the theory of Ideas was also intended to explain the possibility of permanent and real existence, and it would seem absurd to suppose that metaphysics could admit into the Ideal world Ideas of mud and dirt and of similar lowly objects. We may see here a *reductio ad absurdum*, from the Eleatic standpoint, of the close connexion that Plato assumed to exist between the Ideal world and our world of sense, especially of their assumed resemblances, including, perhaps, the plurality that he posited in both. Plato attacks monism in the *Sophist*, and he may have meant the later theory of the generation of Idea-numbers (*if* he held it) to help to defend pluralism. The status of the sensible world is nowhere fully explained, but he may have intended to explain it, as we shall see, in a dialogue that he never wrote, to be called the *Philosopher*. In any case it is clear from the *Seventh Letter* that in the end he did admit Ideas of all such substances as are here in doubt.

The question is now raised of the meaning of "partaking". If each particular sensible object in some sense "partakes" of the whole of the Idea, how are we to reconcile this apparent reduplication, the presence of the Idea at one and the same time in many sensible objects, with the doctrine that Ideas are unique? Socrates sees an analogy in daylight, in which all mortal creatures share, although daylight remains one and exists independently of us. Parmenides objects that this answer is unsatisfactory, for it is like spreading a sail over us and then saying that each of us has his share in the covering; for in fact only a *part* of it covers each of us, and it is absurd to suppose that each sensible object receives only *part* of the Idea.

Socrates admits the difficulty: "it is a very hard question to decide". Parmenides tries to help him, taking Largeness as an example: there may be many large objects, and each of them may possess the quality of being large; but if we are to regard the Idea of Largeness as similar in character to certain physical objects, it must be in virtue of some quality that it possesses in common with them; but this, according to Socrates' theory, should imply the existence of some further Idea. Again, if we admit the existence of that further Idea, the same could be said again, and we should find ourselves with an infinite number of Ideas, instead of with one that was unique! (This argument came to be known as the "Third Man" argument.) Socrates suggests that the Ideas differ from sensible objects in that they are the object of thought. But the Ideas, Parmenides points out, must be more than mere thoughts; for if that is what they are, then all things will partake of thoughts, and all things will *think*—or else none will. The Ideas, then, must be more than mere concepts; and to say that the relationship is one of copy or model to pattern or model is not to avoid the Third-Man argument.

Lastly, the Ideas will have their being with reference to

one another, not with reference to things of this world, and absolute Knowledge will be no more akin to the knowledge that we possess than any other Idea is to any sensible object. Presumably, then, the Ideas can only be known by a superior kind of Knowledge that the gods alone can possess; and conversely, with a superior kind of Knowledge of that sort, how will the gods be able to know us? Such are the difficulties in the theory of Ideas; and yet Parmenides is prepared to admit that basically the theory must be sound, or discussion becomes impossible.

Parmenides suggests—and Plato is probably being ironical—that Socrates must train himself carefully in the kind of dialectic practised by Zeno (a follower of Parmenides), if he wants to discover truth; for at present Socrates can find no answer to the problem. Parmenides then illustrates this kind of dialectic at great length, and his discourse throughout the rest of the dialogue appears to do no more than show that whether the Eleatic thesis that Reality is One be accepted or denied, a number of contradictory conclusions can in either case be drawn.

This surprising discourse has been variously interpreted. The most likely solution is that Plato is showing that on Eleatic assumptions no less than on his apparent contradictions can be found by a subtle use of language; for, as is emphasized in the *Theætetus*, until words are given a fixed meaning by the recognition of Ideas, almost anything can be proved by fallacious argument. The sort of dialectic with which Zeno had attacked Pythagorean pluralism can be turned with equal effect against Eleaticism. It is very likely, as Professor Taylor suggested,¹²⁵ that Plato is thinking in particular of the Megarians, contemporary counterparts of the earlier Eleatics, who may have been responsible for raising the difficulties that appear in the earlier part of the dialogue, but we need not suppose that Plato would not have admitted the seriousness of these difficulties, or that

those objections "are not Plato's own". Socrates could find no answer to them, and if Plato had had a solution to offer he would hardly have been content with "tit for tat" methods. It is far more likely that Plato recognized the incompleteness of his system, and was beginning to give his attention to these difficulties of his theory, which the Megarians, indeed, may well have discovered. He has shown that Parmenides would have accepted his main postulate, and even represents him as accepting Ideas as the only basis of discussion. There may have been flaws in Plato's view, but these called for further examination, not for abandonment of the theory; and the Eleatic thesis was itself not infallible or proof against Zenonian eristic.

The question how we can know the Ideas with the inferior knowledge that human beings possess receives some sort of an answer in the *Seventh Letter*, but to the Third Man argument no solution is to be found in Plato's written work. He was content to maintain his belief in his theory while searching for answers to these questions, in the assurance that no such objections could undermine its fundamental validity.

The *Theætetus* is generally supposed to have been written shortly after the death in battle in 369 B.C. of the young mathematician who gives his name to the dialogue. In this work Plato supports his theory by negative argument, showing that knowledge cannot be attained by the empirical means of the materialists. He is still feeling his way, it would seem, to the positive solutions, that were to follow in the *Sophist*, of problems that had been raised. A full account of the arguments of these works would take up considerable space, and we will confine ourselves to a brief summary.

First of all the claim that sense-perception can provide knowledge is considered, and this theory is associated with

Protagoras' dictum that "man is the measure of all things".¹ But the admitted differences between several people's impressions on perceiving one and the same thing inevitably lead, however true each perception may be for each one of us, to the question, What is wisdom? Again, if sense-perception provides all of our knowledge, what is the explanation of our ability to see written words without understanding them, or of our knowing something that we remember but do not at the time perceive? These, Socrates admits, are *eristic* arguments; Protagoras might say that wisdom is the ability to make what is better, though not truer, appear more acceptable; and a memory-object is different from an object of immediate sense-perception. But all this shows the need to extend the meaning of knowledge from the narrow, Sophistic sense in which it has been used up to this point, so as to include "memory" and "judgment". Socrates is content for the moment to point out the lengths to which extremists who start from Protagoras' premisses can go, maintaining, for example, that justice and the like, no less than hot or cold, only exist "by convention"; and that similarly extreme Heracliteans destroy the possibility of making a statement that can be true for the smallest moment of time. There must be something stable to account for the possibility of knowledge; not all opinions can be true, and Protagoras has failed to explain wisdom as it appears in wise judgment regarding the future. The final refutation of this theory rests upon the facts that our minds can contemplate things like oddness and sameness that are not objects of sense, and that comprehension of moral truths belongs to mind alone. Knowledge, then, is not to be found in sense-impressions; it grows and exists only in the mind. ✓

Theætetus now suggests that knowledge consists in "true judgment"; but this implies that some judgments can be false, and Socrates proceeds to discuss the possibility, on empiricist assumptions, of making a false judgment. On the

Sophistic principle that a thing is either completely known or completely unknown it is clearly absurd to speak of "mistaking" one thing for another, and on the eristic theory that false-thinking is "thinking what is not" there could be no false judgments at all (here we have the old confusion between "what exists" and "what is true"—the Greek being the same for both—but it is not to Plato's purpose to explain the ambiguity now). To broaden the meaning, then, of knowledge, so as to allow for memory, Socrates suggests the image of a Wax Tablet. An imprint may be stamped, as it were, on the waxen tablet of the mind when a piece of knowledge is acquired, and judgment is the mental fitting of an imprint to an object of perception. Thus we can know something in the sense that we have come across it before and that it has left an imprint on our memories, but if the imprint was not clear, or the tablet ineffective, or our assigning for some reason wrong, we may fail to recognize or "know" the object or fact at a later date.

But the majority of false judgments do not consist in incorrect identification, and enlarging the meaning of "knowledge" still further, Socrates compares the mind to an aviary containing pieces of knowledge. When we are told to add up 7 and 5 we may lay hold of 11 by mistake. But there is no explanation why this should happen, or why we should not recognize 11 as the wrong piece of knowledge when we take hold of it; nor does it help to suppose that the aviary contains "pieces of ignorance" as well. Socrates refuses to spend further time considering false judgment before the nature of knowledge has been discovered.

The last suggestion to be discussed is Theætetus' hypothesis that knowledge consists in "true belief that is able to give an account" of a thing: the elementary parts of a thing are unknowable, but the complex whole can be known. Socrates objects that if a thing has parts, it is not a unity, and if it is to be known its parts must be known. As to the

"account", if it means merely the expression of thought in words it is useless unless based on knowledge; and if it means an enumeration of parts (the only kind of definition that Antisthenes recognized) or the statement of a distinguishing mark, it still could not transform true belief into knowledge.

Plato has thus shown that the empiricists' assumption that all our knowledge comes directly or indirectly from the data of the senses, a theory probably derived ultimately from the observational and experimental methods of Alcmaeon and the early schools of medicine, is false. The only possible way of explaining knowledge is by means of Ideas and Recollection, and this explanation is reserved for the *Sophist*.

The opening words of the *Sophist* show that it is a sequel to the *Theætetus*, and it is to a large extent complementary to it. The dialogue sets out to define the Sophist, whose whole activity is found to be concerned with the world of sense and appearance that we now know to be unreal, and his utterances bear the same relation to truth as the world of sense bears to real Being.

We begin with the dialectical method, and find that the Sophist's art comes under the genus "image-making". The eristic question, "Can he make or utter that which is not?" leads on to a full discussion of reality and appearance, and of affirmative and negative statements, together with an explanation of falsity in opinion and in speech. In considering "images" we are concerned with what Parmenides had called "the way of seeming", and in allowing that images in some way exist, Plato had to part company with Parmenides. The dialogue is conducted between Theætetus and an "Eleatic Stranger", and it is clear that Plato considered the Eleatics or the Megarians to be his opponents now; he had yet to show that pluralism was possible, and

that some degree of being could be accorded to the world of sense.

Having dismissed the totally unreal as unthinkable, and having defined an image as "that which is not real but has some sort of existence", Plato goes on to review the theories of earlier thinkers about the nature of reality. Parmenides had treated the Milesians not as monists but as dualists, because he had wanted to show that they had disregarded the Way of Truth; and Plato follows him in this, so that Parmenides is found to be the sole protagonist of real monism, of belief in a reality that is single and unique. Strong arguments are now put forward against this monism. If only the One exists, you cannot call it "whole", for that would imply the existence of Wholeness; you cannot even give it the name of "One", for that implies the existence of Unity; nor can you even say that it exists, for that implies that existence is also real.

In the ancient quarrel between materialists and idealists, Parmenides must be recognized as one of the idealists. Just as in the *Parmenides* the father of Eleaticism was represented as accepting an Ideal world, so here he is counted as a "Friend of Ideas": Plato is counting him as a precursor of Platonism because he was the first to recognize a reality apart from the world of sense. But in this "battle of gods and giants" criticism may be applied not only to the materialists, but to the "Friends of Ideas" as well, for they have gone too far in the other direction. There can be no intelligence without life, and neither intelligence nor life without soul, which is the principle of life; but soul is regarded as constantly changing, as being in perpetual motion, and if the Real contains all these things it cannot be completely changeless. This argument is directed against extreme idealism, which would posit too sharp a separation between the world of Becoming and the world of Being, and make unchangeableness a mark or test of reality. The total sum

of things must comprise all that changes as well as all that is unchangeable; and soul, although inhabiting body in this world, must still be real. Here we have a challenge to the narrowness of the Eleatic view.

The discussion now leaves metaphysics and reverts to logic, and "what is" here acquires yet another meaning, "sameness", so that "is not" may mean "is other than". This discovery was of the utmost importance and value for philosophy. Antisthenes' objection to the application of many attributes or "names" to one sensible object is soon set aside, and we go on to consider the relationship not between sensible objects and Ideas, but between Ideas themselves. Some Ideas can "blend" with one another, and this "blending" is reflected in a true statement; and dialectic can examine when and how this occurs. But the Sophist does not concern himself with these Ideas; only the philosopher does that, and he is to be discussed "later".

Three Ideas high up in the hierarchy of the world of Ideas—Existence, Sameness, and Difference—are now considered, and it is found that between them they will account for all the meanings of "is" and "is not" with which we need to deal—"exists", "is the same as", and "is different from". We now see how in logic "what is" can in a sense *not be*, and similarly how "what is not" can *be*. Parmenides' dicta, at least as applied to logic, can no longer hold good. A false statement as a whole will not, of course, correspond to a non-existing fact—there is no such thing—but the structure of the sentence as a whole does not correspond with the fact as a whole; the statement concerns facts, but facts that do not all apply. The statement has a meaning, but it is not, as Cratylus would argue, a true statement that is irrelevant; the subject may correspond to the right person or thing, but to be true the whole structure of the sentence must correspond to the whole structure of the complex fact. False-speaking is speaking of things that are, but not as they

are; it treats of what is different as though it were the same. Since thinking can be regarded as "an inward dialogue carried on by the mind with itself without spoken sound", a similar explanation can now be given of false judgments. The way is now clear for the final definition of Sophistry as "the art of contradiction-making, descended from an insincere kind of conceited mimicry, of the semblance-making breed, derived from image-making, distinguished as a portion, not divine, but human, of production, that presents a shadow-play of words".

A refutation has been made, then, of Parmenides' monism, and it has been shown that if we are to admit intelligence and soul into the scheme of things, we must allow that the total sum includes all that is in change as well as all that is changeless. At the same time no real explanation has been given of the metaphysical status of an "image". It has been shown that in reference to speech "what is not" need not imply nothingness; in logic it can mean "what is different". But no explanation has been given of how *metaphysics* can allow an intermediate status between Being and nothingness. Discussion of the world of Ideas, too, seems incomplete, and we are promised further discussion of the philosopher's methods that is nowhere to be found in this work or in the *Statesman*. There is reason to suppose that Plato planned a trilogy, to include the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, and another dialogue that was never written, the *Philosopher*, and in the *Philosopher* he may have intended to take up the loose threads that are apparent in the *Sophist*.¹²⁶

The *Statesman* may have been begun¹²⁷ just before and finished just after Plato's last visit to Syracuse in 361 B.C., in view of the fact that Plato shows in this work even less hope than he appears to have had before that a philosopher-king could ever be found, and that this opinion, which only becomes apparent towards the end of the discussion, is

there followed by consideration of forms of government that will provide a compromise.

The characters of the *Statesman* are very nearly the same as those of the *Sophist*. The participants in that discussion meet again the following day, this time to consider the statesman's art, and the Eleatic Stranger delivers what practically amounts to a lecture. His respondent this time, however, is not Theætetus himself, but a young friend of his. Most of the dialogue is taken up with Collection and Division with a view to the definition of the statesman, and it may almost be regarded as an essay in dialectical method—perhaps even as a model for students of the Academy. But important points of interest arise.

At one point in the discussion we reach the hypothesis that the statesman is the "herdsman of men", but it is suggested that there may be many who would conform to that description and might therefore put forward rival claims to the title of statesman. The Stranger interrupts the discussion to relate a myth. The myth is not in itself, perhaps, of great importance, but it serves to illustrate Plato's religious frame of mind. The universe, since it contains body, cannot be altogether changeless, but it changes as little as is conceivably possible; it revolves constantly in one sense, until suddenly its motion is reversed. The reason for this reversal is that for a period God controls the universe, and so long as the Creator and Father manages it, there exists a sort of golden age such as Hesiod describes; in this age men are freed from the cares of the struggle for existence, but at an appointed time God lets go of the helm, and the universe with a sudden shock spins backwards. After a while it recovers itself sufficiently for living creatures to carry on their lives in a fairly orderly manner, and at first they remember the instructions of God their Father; but gradually through their earthly, bodily nature, forgetfulness sets in, and anarchy results. This process, of course,

is supposed to be operating now; but whether men were really happier in the golden age would depend upon the use they made of their good fortune in being free from worldly cares.

The purpose of the myth is to show that our statesman will of course be different from the Divine Shepherd, who fed his flock without their having to toil; under the rule of God, under theocracy, there would be no secular states at all. But that cannot be in the present era. Our ruler will be but a mortal, but we must define him just the same.

The length to which the process of division is being drawn out gives occasion to a digression on proportion. Length is not lengthiness unless it exceeds what is fitting. Here we are introduced to the principle of the Mean, which we are to meet again in the *Philebus*, a principle to which prominence was given later in Aristotle's *Ethics*. For Plato, the Mean is not a definition of anything, and no special theory is implied; it is simply a convenient working principle for everyday use.

Finally we reach a point in the discussion at which forms of government need to be examined. Now governments are commonly judged according to whether one man rules, or a few men, or many; but the wisdom, not the number, of the rulers is what matters. The rule of the truly wise would be best, whether they governed in accordance with a recognized code of law or not; "but since no king is to be found in our cities now outstandingly fitted to rule, like the queen-bee in her hive, it seems that we must follow in the tracks of the ideal, and get together and make laws".¹²⁸ The decision is made reluctantly, for the rule of law is but a poor second-best. If the principle were applied to any other art, and written rules were substituted for scientific knowledge, disaster would soon follow; and if in a law-governed state the conceit of wisdom should creep in, the law itself might be disregarded. But where the laws are adhered to, and no reform is made by force without the

country's approval, then the rule of one man is best, the rule of a few comes next, and democracy comes last; where law does not hold good, the order is reversed. We should observe that by "laws" Plato is thinking of a traditional code of right and wrong, and appears to contemplate few changes; he has no illusion of progress, and once a suitable code has been introduced, there will be little need of change. But where there is no such traditional code, democracy is better than oligarchy or tyranny, because it is "able to do nothing great, either good or bad".¹²⁹

All rulers, however, who do not possess true knowledge must be "divided off" from the statesman; the royal art, as it is called, must include the knowledge which will enable its possessor to weave together the various elements in the state into an ordered whole, instilling true belief into all the citizens and thereby creating a common purpose among diverse personalities. Sometimes a man's temperament might incline him to take one special virtue to excess, but the inculcation of true belief will have a moderating effect; and the ruler in his wisdom will so regulate everything, from marriages to the composition of boards and committees, that there will always be a due admixture or blend of all the requisite virtues. It will be noticed that the special virtues, so far from being different names for the same thing, are here regarded as liable, when taken to excess, to oppose one another. If we are disposed to disapprove of the suggestion that marriage and other institutions closely affecting the individual citizen may be managed and directed by one man, we must remember that Plato is here still speaking of the ideal ruler, and it is hard to deny that, on the assumption of an absolute distinction between good and evil, if it were possible to find a statesman with supreme knowledge, he would be justified in executing or banishing some of the citizens, if he found it best, or in exercising other forms of coercion for the good of the state.

Plato himself frankly admits that to find such a ruler seems to be impossible. The ideal of an infallible statesman must be set aside, and the doctrine accepted instead that the law can do no wrong. Unfortunately the implication of this theory would seem to be that even the investigation of higher truth must be prohibited; and Plato seems to be thinking of Socrates when he refers to the accusations that will be made against such an investigator. Those who rule without knowledge are in fact themselves the greatest of Sophists, for their government is but the unreal image of true statecraft. The ideal statesman would be he who could bind the souls of the citizens with the divine bond of true opinion, and "weave together all things in the state in accordance with what is right".¹³⁰

The *Philosopher*, the last dialogue of the projected trilogy, was never written, probably because now, after Plato's last visit to Syracuse, the prospect of finding a philosopher-king seemed more than ever remote.

The date of the *Philebus* is very uncertain. It has been conjecturally assigned, with some probability, to the period 360-354 B.C.; we can go no further than that. About 370 B.C. a famous astronomer, Eudoxus of Cnidus, had come to Athens, and his pronouncement that pleasure is the good, discussed by Aristotle in his *Ethics*, may have been a contributory cause of the writing of this work. But with the rise of the new intellectualism, which turned from the study of physics that seemed to offer no satisfactory answer to man's most urgent problems, hedonism of one sort or another had become popular among the intelligentsia, and was especially prevalent at this time at the court of Syracuse. We need not be surprised, then, at the earnestness with which Plato discusses the theory in earlier works, and now again in the *Philebus*.

The dialogue sets out to determine what constitutes the

best life for man. Protarchus suggests pleasure, but Socrates thinks that wisdom or true opinion would be better. Protarchus would like to identify the good with pleasure *per se*, making the same equation as is discussed towards the end of the *Protagoras*, but he finally admits that there are many kinds of pleasure, just as there are many kinds of knowledge. This recalls the problem of the One and the Many, and the difference between dialectical and eristic methods of dealing with the problem; but Socrates is induced to leave that point, and he declares that he remembers hearing—it might have been in a dream—that neither pleasure nor wisdom was "the good", but a combination of the two. Pleasure alone would be pleasure unrecognized—the life of an oyster; and no one would like a life of thinking unaccompanied by any pleasure. Assuming that the combination of the two may be best, Socrates goes on to consider which element, pleasure or knowledge, is the more important in the mixture.

Now in any mixture there will be an element of Limit and an element of the Unlimited (the terms are borrowed from Pythagoreanism, which we have already discussed). Unmixed pleasure, as being variable in intensity, will correspond to the Unlimited. The status of wisdom is different: our body and our soul originate in the universe, which must itself possess both; but that which brings about the combination of soul and body must exist in the universe too—we may call it Cosmic Reason; and our human mind must similarly be assigned neither to Limit nor to the Unlimited nor to the mixture, but to a fourth class, that which is the cause of things. The relevance of these considerations lies in the fact that abstract pleasure, unlike abstract reason, is of indeterminate quality, and therefore will only be found as part of a mixture.

Socrates suggests that we may classify pleasures, like opinions, as true or false. He seems to mean that a pleasure

may have the same degree of unreality as a false opinion; that is to say, just as holding a false opinion means making a mistake about the object of thought, so a false pleasure, though real in the sense that it is felt, is only imaginary in that it does not correspond to the pattern of existing facts. Protarchus will concede that we may experience "bad" pleasure at the same time as holding a false belief, but will not allow that any degree of unreality or "falsity" can be attributed to a pleasure. Socrates, to humour him, proceeds to consider pleasures that are experienced in association with true or false opinions, but it is clear from a later remark that he regards certain pleasures as in themselves "tainted" with the same shortcoming as marks a false belief.

If a man's judgment about what is desirable is at fault—if, for example, he values gold for its own sake—we may call the pleasure which he enjoys in the experience, anticipation, or recollection of its possession, like the judgment from which the pleasure is derived, false. Again, a man may be mistaken about the *quantity* of pleasure that he is enjoying. When he has an itch, scratching may give pleasure, but the pleasure will seem greater than it really is through contrast with the annoyance of the itch, and the amount of real pleasure that is present can never be assessed. And lastly, the neutral state in which both pleasure and pain are absent may be mistaken for real pleasure. Now taking these three categories, we may say that pleasures of the second category—those that are "mixed" in the special sense that they cannot be isolated from a feeling of want—are but means to a further end, the state of ultimate satisfaction, and for this reason they cannot be regarded as themselves forming a part of man's ultimate aim. But all three categories alike exhibit "want of measure": that is to say, we cannot properly gauge them at all, and *a fortiori* we cannot observe a mean. They may therefore all be called false. Sometimes, however, as when we look at a colour, the pleasure is not

accompanied at least by any conscious feeling of "lack" or "want"; and such pleasure may be called pure or true.

Types of knowledge may be similarly divided into those which, like geometry and dialectic, deal with absolute truth, and those which, like medicine, depend upon empirical methods; the former we will call "true", and the latter, because they cannot be exact, we will call "false".

In deciding what ingredients will make up the best life, we may accept at once "true" forms of knowledge, because we must try to comprehend the nature of the Good; and we may even add the "false", for a philosopher must live. As for pleasure, the "pure" forms and others which, as in eating and drinking, automatically accompany the necessary activities of life, we are bound to accept; but other forms may be a hindrance to the soul in its pursuit of truth, and these we will reject. It is now possible to draw our conclusions. Measure or the Mean comes first: it is the principle or cause of a good mixture. Next we must rank proportion, beauty, and truth, of which our mixture must partake. So much for causes. Within the mixture itself, the mixture that is the best life, we must place wisdom or intelligence first, then practical knowledge and true belief, and *then* the pure or true pleasures. Lastly, it seems, we may admit such pleasures as are "false" but "necessary". Wisdom, then, is superior to pleasure, and pleasure is not the good; *exeunt* the "lusts of beasts". In this last remark there is a reference to Eudoxus' argument that pleasure is the good because it is the natural aim of "all living creatures".

It will be seen, then, that knowledge retains its high place in Plato's ethical theory, and the principles of measure and proportion are there to maintain the harmony required in the *Gorgias*. The claim of pleasure to be the good, the ultimate aim of man, is finally dismissed, but certain pleasures are defended against extreme anti-hedonists as admissible and even desirable in the highest way of life. A question

which has given rise to much controversy is what place, if any, is to be assigned to the Ideas in the cosmogony of this dialogue. We may mention the latest suggestion, that of Professor Hackforth,¹³¹ which seems very probable: it is likely that the Ideas are the model to which Mind or Cosmic Reason looks, when by means of Limit and the Unlimited it creates this world of Becoming. In the same way they are said to be the model of the Creator in the *Timæus*, to which we now come.

Whether the *Timæus* was written before or after the *Philebus* we cannot be sure. The *Timæus* is the first dialogue of another unfinished trilogy, which was intended to comprise, besides the *Timæus* and the *Critias*, a work called the *Hermocrates*, named after the great Sicilian general and statesman who helped to defend Syracuse against the Athenians in 415 B.C. It seems that the trilogy was intended to give a "mythical" account of the origin of the world, and then to describe the evolution of existing society from earliest times. But the *Critias* is only a fragment, and the *Hermocrates* was never written. It is supposed that some of the material intended for the *Hermocrates* was recast and incorporated in the *Laws*.¹³²

In its opening words the *Timæus* is connected with the *Republic* by the fiction that that discussion had been related the day before. The intention now is to consider how such a polity would work in practice; a complete answer would of course require a full understanding of the psychological nature of man, and this in turn will involve knowledge of the metaphysical status of the soul; these considerations may have been responsible for the mythical account of the creation of the world that forms the greater part of the work. But first Critias recalls a story told to his grandfather by Solon, who had heard it "from a priest of Egypt".

The citizens of Atlantis, an island in the Atlantic off the

straits of Gibraltar, tried to conquer the world by force, and succeeded in overrunning most of Africa and Europe; but they were beaten back by the Athenians, who freed mankind from foreign domination. The point is that Athens at this time, nine thousand years before Solon, is supposed to have been constituted in much the same way as the society described in the early books of the *Republic*. The narrative gives a preview of the detailed account to be contained in the *Critias*, which was probably to be contrasted later with a second-best constitution to be described in the *Hermocrates*. It is to be noted that the division of labour (each man doing one job) which is here attributed to imaginary prehistoric Athens corresponds not only with the definition of Justice in the *Republic*, but also with the contemporary state of affairs in Egypt, from which country the story of Atlantis, according to *Critias*, has been derived. We have seen that Plato may himself have visited Egypt in the course of his early travels.

It is now decided that Timæus shall describe the creation of the world, and this he does in the form of a great myth: "Remembering that I who speak and you of my audience are only human, it is fitting that we should, in these matters, accept the likely story and look for nothing more."¹³³ The Maker, then, being good, wanted to make a universe which would be, so far as possible, like Himself. Reason must therefore exist in it, and as reason resides in soul, soul must be added to the body of the universe in the process of creation. In this process the Creator looked to the Ideas as His model, and in particular to the Idea of Living Creature; and unlike ordinary copies of Ideas, the universe resembles its model in being, of its kind, unique. Order was now brought in in place of chaos. We may compare the description in the *Philebus*, where in Pythagorean language Mind is said to work by applying Limit to the Unlimited.

The universe was made spherical, like the Eleatic One,

and composed of earth, air, fire, and water. Being alive, it must move, and therefore have soul, and the world-soul causes it to rotate upon its axis; the world-soul is made up of Being, Sameness, and Difference—not, of course, the Ideas, nor ordinary copies of the Ideas, but entities, apparently, of an intermediate class; and there is an elaborate description of the way in which this soul was divided up and its parts were arranged as concentric hoops so as to encompass the body of the world. One hoop, called the circle of the Same, represents or incorporates knowledge of the eternal Ideas; the other, the circle of the Different, which was split up into seven separate rings, represents true opinion about the realm of change. Thus the universe, like any other living creature, is endowed with reason. The planets were set in the revolving rings of the circle of the Different, and the sun in the circle of the Same, and they are all carried round in their orbits by these revolving hoops; and Time was introduced, as the likeness, in the changing world, of the Eternity that exists in the immutable world of Ideas.

Next God devised four other kinds of living creature. First came the lesser gods, compounded mostly of fire, whom He set in the "hoop" that is the circle of the Same; they are the stars; then He made creatures to inhabit the earth, land animals and aquatic creatures, and birds to fly in the air. All that the Creator Himself made was bound to be immortal, and therefore in the creation of mortal creatures He used the aid of the created, lesser gods; He Himself supplied a quantity of immortal soul out of what was left over from the making of the world-soul and the souls of the stars, and the lesser gods made the lower parts of the soul for man and finished off the work. These souls were shown the structure of the universe, and told that they would be born as men, and that if they lived well on earth they would return again to the stars; otherwise, transmigration must

follow, possibly into brute beasts instead of into men. Thus it came about that the souls of human beings, implanted in bodies that are subject to all the change of sensible objects, are hampered in their rightful occupation which is thought; and this occurs in a specially pronounced fashion during the years of childhood and youth, while the body grows. The young, in fact, eat more and think less than their elders and betters.

The rest of this dialogue must be passed over very briefly, as the only real alternative would be a very detailed and lengthy discussion. Sensible body is analysed down on Pythagorean lines to triangles, which may be expressed in terms of number; and an attempt is even made to account for the sensible qualities of bodily substances by reference to their geometrical structure. In the course of this discussion we meet again the distinction between "mixed" and "unmixed" forms of pleasure, and the whole treatment of pleasure here corresponds exactly with the doctrine of the *Philebus*. We also meet again the two inferior parts of the soul, passion and desire. The rest of the dialogue goes into details of physiology and psychology, with the object of explaining the causes of physical and psychological disorders, and provides suggestions for maintaining health. The importance of looking after the body, of course, lies in its propensity to affect the soul. At the very end we have a playful suggestion that the existence of the lowest forms of animal is due to man's moral degeneration; souls have sunk so low that more and more depraved types of creature have come into being to suit them. It is a sort of inverted evolution, depending not on physical determination, but on degeneration of soul.

The *Timæus* exemplifies perhaps better than any other dialogue Plato's teleological convictions. To account for the manifestation of reason in the world, he has posited a world-soul; like Socrates, he believes that things are as they are

because "it is best that they should be so", and developing that view he speaks of a Creator fashioning the world in such a way that it should be "as good as possible", "as like as possible unto himself"; and the pattern is still the Ideas, the mainstay of Platonic doctrine. No doubt the astronomical and biological passages, which probably reflect lengthy discussion at the Academy of Eudoxos' and other scientific discoveries, embody matter which is to be taken at its face value, as truth or the nearest approximation to truth that is obtainable or has yet been reached; but the meaning of the warning that the narrative as a whole is but "a likely story" would seem to be that we are dealing in the main with matters that reason cannot penetrate, the purpose and will of God which we cannot hope fully to comprehend.¹³⁴ In mythical form, however, Plato sets forth the *sort* of divine scheme which, in view of the truths that he has learnt, he believes to have been devised. He may not, perhaps, have answered all the criticisms levelled against his philosophy, which, whether he would have admitted it or not, was based on faith as well as on reason; but a more decisive "No" could hardly have been given to the mechanistic materialists than is contained in the *Timæus*.

The fragment which is all that we have of the *Critias* contains the beginning of the detailed account that was to have been given of the repulse of the invading Atlantids by pre-historic Athens. Even geological detail is included; and the vast resources and engineering feats of the aggressors are described as by one who had seen them. The fragment breaks off at the point where the overweening pride of the Atlantids incurs the wrath of Zeus. We may be sure that the purpose of the dialogue was to illustrate the effective working of a society that rested on the structure described in *Republic* I-V. Plato is not thinking of a society containing *all* the features of his ideal state; there is no suggestion, in fact, of a philosopher-king. It seems that he could hardly

bear even to write now about what was still the ideal; or, perhaps, more probably, the practical side of his nature saw that it would not help; at all events, the *Philosopher*, as we have seen, was never written. The *Hermocrates*, which should have formed the concluding work of the present trilogy, would probably have described a constitution falling short of the ideal, something more in keeping with the potentialities of degenerate man; a constitutional arrangement, in fact, that would be suitable for contemporary Syracuse, Hermocrates' native land. But the political situation there became rapidly worse, and it has been suggested that this was the reason why the *Hermocrates* was never written: that Syracuse in its present plight should admit of even a second-best form of government seemed far too much to hope. Some of the material originally intended for the *Hermocrates* may have been incorporated in the *Laws*.

The *Laws* is Plato's longest work. It is divided into twelve books, and must have taken some considerable time to write; its composition may have extended over a matter of years, but no one doubts that in any case it occupied the last part of Plato's life. It seems in many passages not to have benefited from the revision that Plato undoubtedly accorded to most of his other works.

The first few books form a sort of introduction to the rest, a preamble to the account, beginning in Book V, of the second-best constitution and the laws that are to govern it. The speakers are an unnamed Athenian, Cleinias a Cretan, and Megillus a Spartan, and the choice of these characters may be an acknowledgment of the debt which Plato's second-best constitution owes to the constitutions of Sparta and of Crete. But the point is made early on that these two states developed the virtue of courage more than any other, whereas a good constitution should promote all the virtues. The function of law is moral education.

Book II contains a discussion of pleasure with special reference to literature and the arts. Plato's appreciation of the æsthetic pleasure to be derived from these sources is clear, although he still adheres to the principles laid down in the *Republic*, and truth is declared to be a higher and better test than pleasure of ultimate value. The real judge in these matters must not be led astray by popular demand; and that such demand could be persuasive we can infer from the elaborate precautions taken to secure impartiality at Athenian dramatic festivals.¹³⁵ Wise restrictions, then, will not be a hardship, for virtue brings happiness; and this is a true opinion of which the people must be convinced. Book III is concerned with primitive society in which simplicity of life was accompanied by happiness, and with the growth of complex communities in which desires increase and various kinds of authority are required. Athenian and Persian history show that Persia has suffered from excessive despotism, Athens from an excess of freedom. The secret of good government is to lay the right emphasis on the right things: goods of the soul come first, then goods of the body, with money and property last.

Cleinias is supposed to be taking part in the establishment of a new colony, and the discussion is held partly for his benefit. Book IV opens with a consideration of suitable sites for new cities. We are told that God controls all things, and that Chance or Luck co-operate with Him in the management of human affairs: but there is a third factor, skill, and he who has the particular kind of skill required will make the best lawgiver. "This is what he will say: 'Give me the state under a monarchy; and let the monarch be young and possessed by nature of a good memory, quick intelligence, courage, and nobility of manner; and let that quality [natural temperance], which we formerly mentioned as the necessary accompaniment of all the parts of virtue, attend now also on our monarch's soul, if the rest of his

qualities are to be of any value.'"¹³⁶ A tyranny, then, is the best kind of state to convert into an ideal one; next best is a constitutional monarchy, and next a democracy. The monarch can do so much by the influence of example. "Wherever the state authorities are at once strongest and fewest in number, then and there the changes are usually carried out with speed and facility."¹³⁷ It should be the duty and desire of the ruler to require that honour be shown to the gods, and also to parents. In the second-best state, preambles to laws can explain these and other principles, and thus persuasion will co-operate with force.

For the second-best state must needs be discussed. Whereas Plato still believes that "whenever the greatest power coincides in man with wisdom and temperance, there the germ of the best policy is planted",¹³⁸ he has even less confidence than when he wrote the *Republic* that a suitable combination will ever occur. It would be wrong to suppose that the ideal state there described had ceased to be Plato's ideal. It is clearly stated in the *Statesman*¹³⁹ that "the best thing is not that the laws be in power, but that the man who is wise and of kingly nature be ruler", and the rule of law is only advisable "as a second choice, as soon as you depart from the first form of which we were just speaking". The sentiment is the same in the *Laws*. But if a philosopher ever has been king, "that was, as they say, in the Trojan age, certainly not in our time",¹⁴⁰ and the rest of the present dialogue discusses the second-best state.

In this society the land is to be owned by the state and apportioned out in inalienable holdings of equal value. Five thousand and forty is chosen as the best number of citizens, a number which Aristotle considered too large; but Aristotle was thinking of the Athenian assembly, whereas Plato, as we shall see, introduces representative government. Citizens are forbidden to possess gold and silver, or to become excessively rich, for the object of the

lawgiver is not that the state should acquire great wealth, but that it should be happy. At the same time "the limit of poverty shall be the value of the allotment: this must remain fixed, and its diminution in any particular instance no magistrate should overlook, nor any other citizen who aspires to goodness".¹⁴¹ Thus no one, not even a slave, is allowed to starve if he is unemployed through no fault of his own.

When the lawgiver has finished his task of drawing up the constitution, he will hand over all the statutes to thirty-seven law-wardens, and they will be responsible for preserving them from being changed. The law-wardens are, to be elected by all who bear arms, and membership of the board is not restricted to any particular class. They are the executive, but they also have some legislative functions, and even act as judges on certain occasions. Then there is a Council, elected by all the citizens, of three hundred and sixty members, a quarter of whom are drawn from each of four property-classes; and a twelfth part of them will form a standing committee each month, like the *prytaneis* at Athens. In addition there is a Public Assembly, at which attendance, though open to all, is compulsory for the first two property-classes.

Passing over the minor officials, we should mention the Director of Education, who must be one of the law-wardens, and must be most carefully chosen; for "of the highest offices of state this is by far the most important".¹⁴² For the administration of justice, each tribe is to have its own court of law, with judges chosen by lot; and there is to be a court of appeal with judges appointed by the magistrates, one being chosen from each magistracy. As Plato contemplated a code of law that should remain in force indefinitely with little or no change, he certainly did not intend that the Council of 360 or the Assembly should introduce legislation, except possibly on very minor matters.

They were apparently to co-operate in general superintendence of the constitution. Any suggestion of a change would probably have had to come from a far more important and expert body, an institution called the Nocturnal Council. This was to be the "anchor for the whole state".¹⁴³

The ten senior law-wardens and the Director of Education have seats on this Council. Its other members are the predecessors in office of the Director of Education, certain priests, and overseas inspectors who, on their return to their own country, may have suggestions to make from what they have seen abroad; and each member shall bring with him a young man, "selected by himself, between thirty and forty years old".¹⁴⁴ "The Council is to meet at an early hour, when everyone has his time most free from other business, private or public, and their conference and discourse shall deal always with the subject of laws and of their own state, and with anything important they may have learnt elsewhere which bears on this subject, or any branches of knowledge which are thought likely to assist in their inquiry."¹⁴⁵

Now we saw that the lawgiver must have the appropriate *skill*. The same is true of the law-wardens, who, "guided some by wisdom, others by true opinion",¹⁴⁶ should be "sober and sedate men to act as commanders over the un-sober".¹⁴⁷ They must have knowledge of the statesman's true object, which is not the maintenance in power of any particular class, or the wealth, freedom, or world-domination of their country, but the furtherance of virtue. They should know wherein virtue consists, and "in dealing with him that requires knowledge . . . or punishment . . . should excel all others in the art of instructing him in the quality of vice and virtue and exhibiting it fully".¹⁴⁸ In particular they should have a clear grasp of the proofs of the existence of the gods, including the truth about the soul and the Reason that controls the heavenly bodies. They will therefore need a very

thorough education, and must study the relations of the One and the Many, which means, of course, dialectic.

Appointments to office are made partly by free election and partly by lot. Aristotle objects that rulers and subjects are not properly differentiated. But Plato's point is that "the selection of officials that is thus made will form a mean between a monarchic constitution and a democratic; and midway between these our constitution should always stand"¹⁴⁹ The kind of equality to be aimed at is what might be called political justice, "the natural equality given on each occasion to things unequal";¹⁵⁰ for by granting greater honours "to those that are greater in goodness, and the less to those that are of the opposite character in respect of goodness and education, it assigns in proportion what is fitting to each".¹⁵¹ We have to remember that the citizens *must* accept the constitution; the state is in a sense a theocracy, ordered by men who try, so far as their limitations allow, to make it accord with the divine purpose. Once this is admitted, we may allow that there are many democratic features.

Apart from the lessening of Plato's hope, which even when he wrote the *Republic* was faint, that the ideal state could ever come into existence, and the consequent insistence here upon the importance of law, the most striking aspect of the *Laws* is the adjustment of old doctrine to fit a deepened interest in religion. This may be partly due to further study of Pythagorean and Oriental beliefs, and partly to increased awareness of the frailty of mortal man.¹⁵² "No one ever does wrong voluntarily" now becomes "no one who believes, as the laws prescribe, in the existence of the gods, has ever yet done an impious deed voluntarily";¹⁵³ and in Book X we have a discussion of various kinds of disbeliever, and the sort of treatment that they should receive. First there are the atheists, men for the most part misled by the theories of the physicists who ascribe all things to chance (Plato is probably thinking of the atomism of Democritus, though he is not

mentioned by name). Apart from the orderliness of the universe and the general agreement of mankind, the best answer we can give to the atheist is the argument resting upon the self-movement of soul, which must be derived from divine power. As for those who believe that the gods exist but that they do not care for man, this belief is confuted by its ascription to the gods of either idleness or of ignorance of the fact that even the smallest parts are of importance to the whole. On the contrary, all is ordered for the good of the whole, and man should therefore not complain about his lot; the prosperity of the impious is only apparent, for all is evened up by the fate of the soul after death. Lastly, there is the heretic who believes that the gods can be bribed; but it is absurd to attribute to the gods such a low morality, lower even than that of a moderately good man.

Plato draws a distinction between offences, of whatever sort, that are voluntary or involuntary, and also between those that are curable and those that are incurable. We saw in the *Timæus* that he was prepared to admit the effect of physical disturbances upon character; but ultimately, of course, the individual soul is responsible. We may note also that in the *Sophist* and in the *Laws* Plato recognizes that not all sinful folly is due to the suppression of reason by passion or desire: sometimes the reason may fail to function as it should through inherent frailty.¹⁵⁴ There are many considerations, then, to be taken into account in assessing appropriate penalties for crime, and wherever it may be of use admonition will be given, with or without other punishment, in the hope of reforming the wrongdoer's character; but the death sentence may be passed on incurable malefactors for heinous crimes.

Plato's emphasis in Books III and IV on the necessity of innate sobriety must be due to his experience at Syracuse; Dionysius had not shown the natural qualities without which there can be no transformation in the character of a monarch's

rule. We have seen that Plato had hardly any hope now that ideal government would ever be found; and even the second-best constitution which he describes in the *Laws* "will never be likely to meet with such favourable conditions that the whole programme can be carried out according to plan",¹⁵⁵ and "the third we shall investigate hereafter, if God so will".¹⁵⁶

We have discussed earlier on the circumstances in which the *Seventh* and *Eighth Letters* were written. The *Eighth*, written in 353 B.C., contains in its suggestions for a compromise in the government at Syracuse many resemblances to the constitution described in the *Laws*. A translation of the *Seventh* will be found at the end of this book, and we need go into no details here. We may, however, notice one or two points that are made in the philosophical passages. Plato believes in the immortality of the soul and in a judgment after death (335a); he affirms the impossibility of communicating philosophical truth in writing (341b seq.); he refers to dialectic (343de), and to the difference between knowledge of things of this world and knowledge of Ideas, the gap between the two realms being bridged, apparently, by a sudden intuition, a flash of understanding that follows upon the dialectical process (341cd, 344b). This is no doubt made possible by the kinship of the immortal part of the soul with the soul of the universe, described in the myth of the *Timæus*. He seems to state definitely that there are Ideas corresponding to all the things of this world, whether they be what we might call abstractions, or natural or manufactured objects. Fire, of which Socrates in the *Parmenides* was doubtful whether there could be an Idea, is specifically mentioned (342d).

Emphasis is laid throughout the letter on the need, in a ruler, of a natural leaning towards philosophy, for without it, however much ability or quickness at learning may be

shown, no approach to truth can be achieved (344a). This was where Dionysius had failed.

In conclusion we must mention a doctrine which has been attributed to Plato on Aristotle's evidence. Clearly it would have to belong to the last part of Plato's life, and be later than the *Philebus* and the *Timæus*, or we should have met clear expression of it in these dialogues. This is the doctrine that Ideas are identical with numbers.¹⁵⁷

In trying to answer the problems of the relationship of Ideas to sensible particulars and of Ideas to each other, it was perhaps natural that Plato should turn to Pythagoreanism for help, as he had done in his early attempts to escape from the mechanistic philosophy of the materialists, and if he identified Ideas with numbers he may have been trying to explain the plurality that must exist within the world of Ideas, as well as the numerical orderliness that he found in the world of sense. We have seen that earlier on, in the *Philebus*, the principle of Limit was regarded as numerical or quantitative, and Professor Hackforth¹⁵⁸ points out that the *Philebus* speaks of Limit where the *Timæus* speaks of "forms and numbers";¹⁵⁹ and we may perhaps with him interpret the "forms and numbers" there mentioned as the intermediate mathematical numbers referred to by Aristotle. Plato had thus been able to account for the order or determination of sensible objects without infringing the immutability of his Ideas which "went not forth".¹⁶⁰ But he may well have decided later that a divine agency, as it were, could apply the principle of Limit without affecting that Limit. Certainly Aristotle considered Plato to have spoken of Ideas themselves as Limiting principles, and he several times suggests that Plato identified these Ideas with numbers.¹⁶¹

Whereas the material principle may always be regarded as "the great and the small", the formal principle is the One, in the production of Ideas, and the Ideas in the production of sensible objects. The One—which some, including perhaps

Plato, identified with the Good—acts upon the “great and small” and produces determinate entities which may be regarded as at once Ideas and numbers. There is then a plurality in the world of Ideas, derived from the unity of the One. When the Idea-numbers have been produced, they in turn act upon the “great and small” and produce sensible objects—and do so, in a process which is purely *logical*, without any “going forth”. Thus numerical order is created in the world, and the Ideas are again in a more direct sense what Plato originally intended them to be, the cause of all things.*

We hear of Plato delivering a lecture on the Good, of which several members of the audience wrote their versions.¹⁶³ It seems that this was a public occasion, as we hear that many went expecting to hear him discourse upon health and wealth and the like, and were astonished when he spoke of mathematics. But we must suppose that Plato did a good deal of private work with members of the Academy, and he may have propounded his number doctrine then. Discussion will have led to the further developments upon it, made by Speusippus, Xenocrates, and others, that are criticized, together with Plato's own views, by Aristotle.

We will not here discuss Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's theory of Ideas, except to mention his main objection: this was that Plato should not have tried to explain this world by postulating another. This, he thought, merely doubled the number of entities to be explained; and for Aristotle the form resides in matter. Only the resulting combination of form and matter, existing in separate sensible objects, can be said to have real existence, but there can only be knowledge of the universal or form. It would appear, however, that if the complete Idea resides inside each separate object, each Idea must be a plurality. We have seen that this objection, of apparent reduplication, is raised against a similar notion in the *Parmenides*. Aristotle, indeed, tells us that

similar sensibles will not differ in their form except "numerically"—that is to say, they differ in their matter or "proximate matter", and by "proximate matter" he means all that is left over when the generic form is abstracted; but it seems difficult to deny that Aristotle's rewriting of Plato's theory destroys both the unity and the permanence of the objects of knowledge, and there is little to account for differences of character. Plato's explanations were not complete, but Aristotle's development of the theory was not an improvement.

* Professor Cherniss, however, has recently argued that Plato never "generated" Ideas or identified them with numbers (see Bibliography, p. 192).

TRANSLATION OF PLATO'S *SEVENTH LETTER*
(For the circumstances in which the letter was written,
see pp. 50-52)

323d **P**LATO sends best wishes to the relatives and partisans
of Dion.

You wrote to me to say that I must consider your principles
to be the same as those that Dion held, and you asked me to
help you, so far as I was able, both in action and by giving
324a advice. Well, if you really have the same opinions and desires
as Dion had, I agree to co-operate, but if not, I warn you
that I shall think twice about it; and I could give you an
account, based not on guess-work but on sound knowledge,
of the nature of those principles of his, and of his hopes.
When I came to Syracuse on my first visit—I was about
forty at the time—Dion was of the same age as Hipparinus*
is now, and the opinions which he then acquired he con-
tinued to hold throughout his life: the view, I mean, that
b Syracusans should be free, living under the best possible
laws. It is therefore no matter for surprise if some god has
made Hipparinus fall in with the same policy as Dion held.
It is worth while for you all, young and old alike, to hear of
the way in which Dion came to acquire these beliefs, and I
will take the opportunity that present circumstances afford
of trying to explain it to you from the beginning.

When I was young I expected, as the young often do,
that as soon as I was grown up I should at once take part in
the public life of the city. And I was confronted with
c certain developments in the political situation, which I will

* Dion's nephew, who was leading the Dionean party against
Callippus. He was about twenty-one.

now describe. The existing constitution had met with widespread disapproval, and a change was made, in which fifty-one men stood out as prime-movers. There were eleven of them at Athens, and ten at the Peiræus, and each of these bodies had charge not only of the markets but of all matters requiring attention in the towns as well; and the other thirty had a position of unlimited authority over all. Now it so happened that some of these were relatives and acquaintances of mine, and they at once invited me to take part in what they regarded as my proper concern. My reactions, for one who was young, were not surprising. I supposed that in their management of public affairs they would substitute justice for injustice in national life, and I watched closely to see what they would do. I found that in a short while they made the former constitution appear by comparison to have been a golden age. In particular, they sent Socrates, an elderly friend of mine, whom I would hardly hesitate to call the most upright man then living, with some others to arrest one of their fellow-citizens, to take him by force to execution. I suppose their purpose was to make him an accomplice in their own misdeeds, whether he wanted to be or not; but he refused to comply and risked everything rather than associate himself with them in their unholy acts. 325 Seeing, then, all these events, and many other crimes by no means negligible, I was disgusted, and withdrew myself from the wickedness of the times.

Not long afterwards the Thirty fell, and the whole of that régime was at an end; and desire to take part in public life slowly but surely came over me again. Now at this time b also, confused and disorderly as it was, many events occurred of which one could scarcely approve, and it was not surprising that in the course of a revolution excessive vengeance should be meted out to political enemies; and yet the returned democrats did show considerable forbearance. But it happened that certain influential persons brought our

friend Socrates to trial, charging him with a most iniquitous charge, and one that could hardly have been less appropriate for Socrates. He was prosecuted, condemned, and executed for impiety—he who had refused to share in the iniquitous arrest of one of the friends of the exiles, at the time when his assailants themselves were in misfortune and suffering exile.

As I observed all this, and the men who were managing the city's affairs, and the laws and the customs then in force, the more I watched and the older I grew, the more difficult it seemed for me to follow out a policy of good government. Without trustworthy friends and supporters it was impossible to act; but it was certainly no simple matter to find such supporters already in existence, for our city was no longer managed in accordance with the traditions and practices of former generations, and readily to create them was quite impossible. Moreover the laws, both written and unwritten, were falling into abuse, and the decline was proceeding at an alarming speed; and the result was that I, who at first had been full of enthusiasm for a political career, now that I observed all this and saw that everything was being turned completely upside down, became finally dazed by the spectacle, and although I never stopped considering how these matters in particular and the constitution as a whole might yet be improved, I nevertheless postponed action, waiting always for opportunities. Finally I decided that all existing cities were badly governed—their constitutions were almost beyond remedy, unless some unpredictable force were brought to bear, aided by good fortune—and I was forced to say, in praise of true philosophy, that only by its help can political justice and the rights of the individual ever be discerned. The human race would therefore have no respite from its troubles, until either those who rightly and truly engaged in philosophy attained to political power,

or those who had influence in cities through divine dispensation became true philosophers.

This was my general outlook when I came to Italy and Sicily on the occasion of my first visit. On my arrival I was by no means pleased by the manner of life that is there considered the essence of happiness, a life crammed full of Italian and Syracusan banquets, a life in which one gluts one's self twice a day and never sleeps alone at night, and indulges in all the practices that accompany this way of living. No man upon earth, engaging in such practices from his youth up, could ever, after forming these habits, c attain to wisdom; no one's nature will ever contain such an astonishing mixture; as for temperance, he could never even come near to being temperate—and it is the same with all the other virtues. Similarly no city could remain peaceful under any laws whatever, if men thought it right to spend their money on all kinds of excess, and thought it right to be idle in everything except the acquisition of luxury and d drink and erotic pleasures on which all their enthusiasm and effort was expended. These cities must be constantly changing one form of government for another—tyrannies, oligarchies, democracies—and men of influence in such cities are bound to find the very sound of the words "justice" and "fairness" intolerable.

With these thoughts, then, to supplement those others, I crossed to Syracuse. Possibly my going was mere chance, e but it certainly seems as though some higher power did in fact at that time lay the foundation of all the misfortunes that have since befallen Dion and Syracuse—and of more still to come, I fear, unless you listen to me now as I give my advice for the second time.

What do I mean by saying that my arrival in Sicily at that time was the beginning of all these troubles? When I 327a met Dion, who was then young, and expounded to him what seemed to me to be best for men, and urged him to

put those principles into practice, it seems that I was unaware that I was somehow insensibly bringing about an overthrow of the tyranny that was to take place in the future. Dion, who was always quick to learn, and was especially quick in understanding what I said then, listened more keenly and earnestly than any young man I have ever met, and ^b decided to live the rest of his life in a manner different from most of the Italian and Sicilian Greeks, setting his heart upon virtue as being of more worth than pleasure, and all their soft, luxurious ways. As a result, up to the time of Dionysius' death his habits gave constant annoyance to those who lived in the manner usual at tyrants' courts.

After this, Dion conceived the idea that this outlook, which he had gained as the result of true reasoning, need ^c not be confined to himself, and he did in fact see and remark that it existed in others too—not in many, perhaps, but still in some. He thought, then, that Dionysius* too, if Heaven helped, might perhaps become one of their number. If something of that sort happened, then his life and the lives of all the rest of the Syracusans would be made happy beyond description. Moreover, he thought that I ought to recall how easily his own association with me had created in him desire of the noblest and best way of life, and that I ^d should by all means come with all speed to Syracuse to share in his present enterprise. If he could accomplish another such transformation in Dionysius, which was the task he had undertaken, he had every hope that without murders and deaths and all the evils that have in fact occurred he might establish throughout the country a happy and true way of life.

This was Dion's very proper point of view. He persuaded Dionysius to send for me, and he himself began to send ^e messages and to entreat me to come at once by all manner of means, before others got hold of Dionysius and misdirected him to some way of life that was other than the

* Dionysius II.

best. In making his entreaties, this was what he said, even if it is rather long to relate: "What greater opportunities", he said, "can we expect than those which have now, through Heaven-sent good fortune, presented themselves?"—and he reminded me of the Italian and Sicilian empire and of his own influence in it, and of the youth and enthusiasm of Dionysius, speaking in encouraging terms of his attitude to philosophy and education, and of the ease with which his own nephews and relations could be converted to the way of thinking and way of life of which I was always talking—and they would be quite capable of winning over Dionysius as well: so that now, if ever, all our hopes would be realized, our hopes that love of wisdom and rule over great cities might be united in the same men. 328a

These, then, were the words of encouragement I received, and many more like them. For myself, I was apprehensive of the outcome of the impulsiveness of youth—for the desires of the young are fleeting, and often contradictory; but so far as Dion's judgment was concerned, I knew that his nature was most reliable, and that his views were now tempered by mature years. As I considered the matter and hesitated whether I should go and answer his call or what I should do, the balance swung in favour of making the attempt. If anyone were ever to try to realize our theories about laws and constitution, an attempt must be made now. If I could persuade but one man, I should have done enough to achieve all manner of good. b

I set out from home in this frame of mind, and with this bold intent—not for the reasons which some supposed, but chiefly for the sake of self-respect, fearing the shame of seeming to myself to be nothing more than a mere man of words, who would never set his hand to any deed, and of seeming, in addition, to be ready to risk the sacrifice of the friendship and comradeship of Dion, who was without doubt in no small danger. Suppose something should c d

happen to him, or he should be driven out by Dionysius and his other enemies and come to us as an exile, and question me: "Plato, I come to you as a fugitive, not through lack of infantry or want of cavalry to repel the foe, but simply through lack of arguments and persuasiveness—qualities by means of which I know that you, more than anyone else, were able to start young men on the path of goodness and justice, and to establish friendship and comradeship among them on every occasion. I have left Syracuse and am here before you now for want of this help that you could have given. My personal misfortune need cause you little shame; but philosophy, which you are always praising, and which you say is dishonourably neglected by the rest of mankind—surely you have now betrayed not only me, but philosophy as well? If we happened to live at Megara, ^{329a} I suppose you would have come to support me in meeting the difficulties against which I asked you to help, or else you would think yourself most contemptible. As it is, it would appear that you make your excuse the length of the journey, the distance of the sea-crossing, and all the trouble involved. Do you suppose, then, that you will ever by such means escape a reputation of cowardice? I assure you, you will not."

If Dion should have spoken like that, what plausible answer could I make? There is no reply that I could give. So, having every reason to come, acting as honourably as man can act, and for the purpose leaving my own pursuits, ^b which were not to be despised, I came to a tyrant's court, which seemed to suit neither my principles nor me; and by my coming I acquitted myself before Zeus, the god of friendship, and rendered myself free from blame on the part of philosophy, which would have been reviled if I had shown a weak and cowardly spirit and incurred ignoble shame.

On my arrival, to cut a long story short, I found the whole

of Dionysius' court full of intrigue and of slanderous accusations about Dion that were brought before the tyrant. I countered them so far as I could, but I could do little, and after perhaps about three months Dionysius charged Dion with plotting against the throne, put him on a small boat and sent him into dishonourable exile. After this all of us who were friends of Dion were afraid that the tyrant might accuse one of us and wreak his vengeance for supposed complicity in Dion's plot; and indeed a rumour about me found its way through the city, saying that I had been put to death by Dionysius as the cause of all that had happened. But in fact Dionysius, observing our feelings, and fearing that our fears might lead to some serious result, tried to win us all by kindness; and as for unfortunate me, he tried to console and reassure me, and kept begging me by all means to stay. My flight from him was going to bring him no prestige, but my staying might—so he continued the elaborate pretence of making requests, although we know, of course, that the requests of tyrants are in the nature of commands. To make sure, then, of my staying, he prevented me from sailing off by bringing me into the acropolis and making me take up quarters inside. From there no sea-captain would ever have dreamt of taking me against Dionysius' instructions; indeed none would have taken me unless Dionysius should have personally sent a messenger with authority to order my dismissal. Again, no merchant, no single harbour-official would ever have allowed me to depart alone. They would have seized me and immediately returned me to Dionysius, especially as the news had now been spread that, contrary to the earlier reports, Dionysius was very fond of Plato. 330a

How did the matter really stand? I must reveal the truth. As time went on, as a result of personal observation of my ways and character, he became more and more fond of me, and he wanted me to praise him more than I praised Dion;

and he showed an astonishing anxiety that I should do so. But so far from following the course by which this object
b could have been best achieved, if it was going to be achieved at all, he shrank from any intimacy or close association with me, and from learning and listening to the arguments of philosophy, because he feared the slanderers' reports, and was afraid of being tricked and of letting Dion accomplish his alleged purpose. I, for my part, endured all this, clinging to the original intention which I had formed upon my arrival, in the hope that he might come to desire the life of a lover of wisdom; but his obstinacy prevailed.

This is the story of my first period of residence in Sicily
c and of my doings on the island. After this, however, I left home and went again when Dionysius in all eagerness sent for me to come. I will explain to you presently how reasonable and right were my motives and achievements on that occasion, so as to satisfy those who ask what my object was in going the second time; but first I will advise you what you should do in the present circumstances, for I must not treat of secondary matters as though they were the chief ones. Here is my advice.

When one is giving advice to a sick man who leads a life
d that is incompatible with health, I suppose the patient's way of life must first be changed. If he will agree to this, then the counsellor should go on to give the rest of his advice. But if the patient refuses to change his habits, then I would consider a true man and a true doctor the counsellor who should refuse to give advice to such a patient, and I should consider him who bore with such behaviour both cowardly and unprofessional. The same holds good of cities, whether they be ruled by one man or by more. If the state is run on fixed principles, and follows a correct course, and advice is asked on some matter of policy, it is the part of
e a sensible man to give his advice in answer to such a request. But there are those who depart altogether from the right

way of government, and flatly refuse to follow in its path and pronounce to their adviser that he must leave the constitution well alone and not interfere with it on penalty of death; they bid men serve their wishes and desires when they come to give advice, telling them how these ends might most easily and swiftly be accomplished once and for all; and I would consider him who agreed to give such advice a coward, and him who refused, a true man. This is my opinion, and whenever anyone asks for my advice about one of the most important aspects of his life, about the making of money, for instance, or the care of body or soul, if I believe that he is living his daily life in accordance with some fixed plan, or that if I give my advice on the matter in question he would be willing to take it, then I gladly advise him, and do not rest content with a merely superficial statement. If, on the other hand, he does not ask at all for my opinion, or if it is clear that if I gave it he would never act upon it, I do not go to such a person to volunteer my advice unasked, or again to apply compulsion, even if he be my son. I would give advice to a slave, and if he would not take it, then I should use force; but I do not think it right to use force against a father or a mother, unless they are afflicted with mental disorder. If they regularly live a life that satisfies them but does not please me, I think that it is as wrong to offend them by offering useless rebukes, as it would be to flatter them and to truckle to their ways, pandering to desires that I would rather die than entertain myself.

The sensible man will hold the same opinion about his city: that he should speak out, if he thinks that it is not being managed well, provided that his words are not going to fall on deaf ears, and that he is not going to die for his pains, but that he should not bring force to bear upon his country so as to effect a change of government, just because without exile and murder of men it is not possible for the

best form of government to come into being. He should remain at peace and pray for blessings upon himself and his native land.

These are the principles in accordance with which I will advise you now, as with Dion's help I also advised Dionysius. I urged him before all else to live his daily life in whatever way he was most likely both to win mastery over himself, and to acquire trustworthy friends and adherents. Then he would not have the same experience as his father, who recovered many great Sicilian cities that had been devastated by the barbarians, but was unable, when he settled them, to set up in each a reliable government, consisting of men who were his followers. Even his own younger brothers were unsuitable, although he had himself brought them up, and raised them from humble station to positions of power, and from poverty to the enjoyment of great wealth. He was unable by persuasion or by teaching, or by appeals to gratitude or to ties of kinship, so to work upon even one of them as to make him a partner in his rule. He was seven times more unfortunate than Darius, who trusted, not brothers or someone whom he had himself brought up, but men who had merely co-operated with him in the overthrow of the Mede and the Eunuch. To these he allotted seven portions of his empire, each larger than the whole of Sicily, and he found in these partners loyal adherents who never attacked either him or each other; and he provided an example, moreover, of what the good lawgiver and king should be, for by making laws he preserved the Persian Empire, which has remained intact even to this day. The Athenians, too, recovered many Greek cities, not originally settled by themselves, and for seventy years they preserved their empire, through having found in each city men friendly to themselves. Dionysius, on the contrary, gathered all Sicily into one city, in his wisdom trusting no one, and hardly preserved himself: the reason was poverty of trustworthy

friends, and there is indeed no clearer sign of goodness or badness than this, the presence or absence of friends who can be trusted.

Since this had been the experience of young Dionysius' father, Dion and I together gave this advice to the son, who had had no education, and none of the guidance that he should have had, as the first step; then, starting in this way, he should acquire from among the number of his relatives and associates friends whose virtue would harmonize with his own. But the chief thing was for him to create a harmony within himself, for this at the time was conspicuously absent. We did not put it quite as blatantly as that, but we hinted, and argued that by the means we suggested every man would save himself and those who were under his guidance, but that taking any other course would achieve the opposite result. If Dionysius set out as we suggested and made himself sound and temperate by nature, and then resettled the devastated cities of Sicily and made them secure by means of laws and constitutions, so that they should be closely attached to himself and to each other and united in the campaign against the barbarians, he would not only double the empire which he had inherited, but really make ^{333a} it many times as large. It was likely, if these steps were taken, that he would subjugate the Carthaginians with a very much more thorough subjugation than occurred in Gelo's time, instead of doing what his father had done and agreeing to pay tribute to the barbarians.

This was what we said, and this was the advice that we gave—we who, according to the rumours that were going about in many quarters, were plotting against Dionysius. These rumours found acceptance with Dionysius, and caused the exile of Dion, and put us all into a state of panic; and to

332d: "*first step*". B₁ makes a lacuna (unnecessarily, I think) after these words. The reading of O₂ for what follows would mean "making this his aim".

b sum up a long story in a few words, Dion came from Athens and the Peloponnese, and taught Dionysius a practical lesson. But when Dion had freed the city and restored it to the inhabitants twice over, the same feelings towards Dion as Dionysius had entertained made their appearance among the Syracusans. Dion had tried to educate and train Dionysius to be a king, worthy of the rule he bore, and to devote himself to all Dionysius' interests; but Dionysius had listened c to the slanderers who said that Dion was plotting against the throne in all that he did during that period, so that Dionysius should be deluded by the instruction which he received, and forget about his sovereign power, entrusting it to Dion, while Dion appropriated it to himself and finally drove out Dionysius by a trick.

These slanders, I say, prevailed again then, the second time, winning belief among the Syracusans; a strange and shameful victory for those responsible. You who invite me to give advice on the present situation should hear how d it happened. I, an Athenian, a friend of Dion and his ally, came to the tyrant's court to create not war but friendship; but in the fight against the slanderers, I lost. Although Dionysius tried to persuade me by offering me money and honours to aid and abet him in giving a plausible appearance to his exile of Dion, he failed completely. Later on, when e Dion returned home, he took with him two brothers, who had become his friends not through a common regard for philosophy, but as a result of the short-lived comradeship on which most friendships are based, a comradeship formed through entertaining, and through initiating and being initiated in the mysteries. These two who helped Dion in his invasion became his comrades through such means as these, and through services they rendered with a view to his return.

333b: "many events that occurred within a short while" (acc. to Oxford text).

When they arrived in Sicily, they saw that Dion had been ^{334a} maliciously accused before the Sicilians whom he had freed by plotting to become tyrant, and they not only betrayed their comrade and one-time guest, but did the next best thing to murdering him with their own hands; for they themselves stood by the murderers with weapons in their hands, ready to assist. The horribleness and the wickedness I do not disregard, though I do not speak of it now: many others concern themselves with bruiting that tale abroad, and will do evermore. But as for what is said about "Athenians"—the charge, I mean, that these two brought disgrace ^b upon the city—that I utterly discount. I say that he too was an Athenian who did not betray this same Dion, when he might have received money and many honours besides for doing so. This man was not a friend of the baser sort; he had become his friend through common pursuit of liberal studies, in which alone the sensible man should trust, far more than in kinship of souls or bodies; so that I do not ^c think that Dion's murderers were sufficiently important to have brought disgrace upon the city, as though they had ever been men worth taking into account.

All this has been said with a view to advising the friends and relatives of Dion. On top of this I give some further advice, presenting the same counsel and the same arguments on this the third occasion, to you the third recipients. My advice is not to make Sicily or any other state the servant of a despot, but rather the servant of law. The other course is better neither for the masters nor for the slaves, neither for ^d themselves nor their children's children nor their descendants in years to come. The attempt is wholly ruinous, and only petty and illiberal natures like to snatch such advantages, natures that know nothing of what is or will be good or just in the eyes of God or man.

Of these facts I endeavoured to convince first Dion, secondly Dionysius, and now thirdly I am trying to convince

you; and do you believe me, for the sake of Zeus the Saviour, who is always invoked third, and also in view of the example of Dionysius and of Dion. The one refused to yield, and now lives in dishonour, while the other believed, and died^e an honourable death; for to suffer whatever one suffers in striving to achieve what is best for one's self and for one's city is altogether right and honourable. No one of us is deathless, and if anyone should be exempt from death, he would not then be happy, as the many suppose: for nothing bad or good that is worth taking into account can befall that which has no soul. Such affections will come to each soul either when it is combined with body, or when it is separate.

335^a We should really always believe the old and sacred stories which reveal to us that souls are immortal, and are judged, and pay the greatest penalties, whenever one is freed from the body. For this reason we should consider it a lesser evil to suffer much wrong and injustice than to inflict it. This is a doctrine to which the man who is selfish and poor in^b spirit will not listen, or, if he does listen, he roars with laughter in the conceit of his ignorance; and shamelessly he snatches everywhere whatever he supposes, like the beast that he is, will provide him with food or drink or satisfaction in the form of that slavish and unlovely pleasure that is wrongly called by the name of the goddess of Love. He is blind, and cannot see, when his snatchings are accompanied by sin, the sort of harm that has been derived from each act of injustice, a load of wickedness that the transgressor must take with him as he moves about the earth, and also when he^c returns beneath the earth on that journey of dishonour and utter misery.

I told this and other such tales to Dion in my endeavour to win him, and I should have every reason for being angry with his murderers, in much the same way as I should for being angry with Dionysius; for those murderers, and Dionysius

335b: Burnet's text here is certainly corrupt.

too, have done the greatest possible harm to me and to almost all the rest of the world, in the one instance by killing the man who wanted to act aright, in the other by refusing to act aright in all his exercise of government, although he had great power; and if in his reign philosophy and power had really been combined in one and the same man, the union would have shone forth as a great light throughout all the world, Greek and barbarian as well, and it would have been sufficient to establish among all mankind the true belief that no city and no man will ever be happy, unless wisdom guides and justice is the rule throughout the whole of life, whether such wisdom be self-acquired, or the result of sound character-training and education under the rule of god-fearing men.

This was the real harm that Dionysius did; his other misdeeds did me little damage by comparison. He who killed Dion does not know that he has done exactly the same as Dionysius. I am quite sure, so far as one man can be sure about his fellows, that if Dion had kept the rule, he would have done two things. He would have been satisfied with no other form of government, but once he had cleansed Syracuse, his native land, and freed her from slavery, and bedecked her in the garb of freedom, he would next have arrayed the citizens, so far as he was able, with laws that were suitable and best. Then he would have been eager to do what comes next, to settle the whole of Sicily and free it from the barbarians, driving out some of them and subduing others—and that would have been an easier task for him than it was for Hiero. If all this had been done by a man who was just and brave and temperate and a lover of wisdom, the same opinion about virtue would have arisen among most men as, if Dionysius had been won over, would have been created throughout almost all the world, and would have brought about salvation. As it is, some more-than-human power, or avenging spirit, by creating lawlessness and godlessness

and, above all, recklessness arising from ignorance—that ignorance which is the soil from which all evils spring and blossom forth and bear their harvest, so bitter to those who sowed them, to be reaped in days to come—yes, ignorance for the second time upset and ruined everything.

c Now, on this third attempt, let us for the omen's sake say nothing that may be amiss. But I do advise you, his friends, to copy Dion, his patriotism and his temperate way of living; and to try with better fortune to fulfil his policy—what that was, you have heard from me already; and anyone among you who cannot live in the Dorian fashion according to the d traditions of your fathers, but follows instead the way of life of Dion's murderers, the Sicilian way, I advise you not to invite his help, nor to suppose that he could ever do anything reliable or sound. You should call in to help in the resettlement of all Sicily and the establishment of fair government everyone else, from Sicily itself and from the whole of the Peloponnese, and do not be afraid of Athens: for in that city too there are those who excel all men in virtue, and hate the reckless deeds of those who kill their friends.

If these reforms would seem to suit a later date, whereas e you are at present harassed by the many and various party differences that grow up every day, every man whom some divine chance has endowed with even a small share of right opinion should know that there is no cessation of ills for those who engage in strife until those who win in battle stop satisfying grudges by exiling and executing and in 337a other ways taking vengeance on their foes. They must be in control of themselves, and establish laws that hold good for all, and are no more framed to suit their own pleasure than those who have been defeated. They must then compel them to obey the laws by means of two cogent forces, respect and fear: inspiring fear through being stronger, and displaying their power, and respect by making it plain that they

are superior in their attitude to pleasure, and are more willing and able than they to submit to the law. There is no other way in which a city that is suffering from internal strife could ever be made to cease from its troubles; cities thus affected towards themselves are likely always to experience faction and enmity and hatred and mistrust.

Whenever the victors want security, they must choose out among themselves whomsoever they discover to be best among the Greeks, in the first place men of advanced years who have wives and children at home, preferably men who have a long line of good and distinguished ancestors and possess, all of them, adequate property. These they should send for and induce by entreaty and by offer of the highest honours to leave their homes, and when they have sent for them they should request and urge them to make laws, after those who have been invited have first promised upon oath not to grant advantage to victors or to vanquished, but to dispense rights that are equal and common to all. When the laws have been made, everything depends upon this: if the victors show themselves more ready than the vanquished to submit to the laws, there will be every hope of salvation and happiness, there will be escape from all the former trouble; otherwise do not invite me or anyone else to help in dealing with him who does not agree to what I have now prescribed. This plan is akin to what Dion and I together tried, with the best of intentions, to realize for Syracuse. It is only a second-best, for best of all was what we attempted to achieve with the help of Dionysius himself, the common good of all; but some fate, more powerful than man, prevented that. Do you now try with better fortune to achieve your present object, if good luck will aid you, and heaven grant some miraculous opportunity.

So much for my advice and recommendation, and so much

337c: I here omit "There should be fifty for a city of ten thousand inhabitants; fifty such men should suffice"—as an interpolation.

for my first visit to Dionysius. Next anyone who is interested may hear how reasonable and conscientious were the motives behind my later journey and voyage. Now the first period of my stay in Sicily was spent in the manner I described
 338a before giving my advice to the relatives and partisans of Dion. After that, I persuaded Dionysius by every means I could to let me go, and when peace returned—for there was war in Sicily at the time—we both agreed that I should come back again. Dionysius declared that he would summon Dion and myself again after he had set the affairs of his empire on a securer basis, and he was anxious that Dion should consider that he had suffered not the sort of exile that carries with it loss of civic rights, but merely deportation.
 b On these terms I agreed to come again.

When peace was restored, Dionysius began sending for me, but he asked that Dion should wait another year, while urging that I should by all means come. Dion, too, began to persuade and beg me to sail. The fact was that many reports were coming from Sicily that Dionysius was now once more remarkably keen on philosophy, and for this reason Dion most earnestly begged me not to fail to answer
 c the call. I knew that the young often experience these feelings about philosophy, but nevertheless it seemed safer to say goodbye once and for all to Dion and Dionysius, and I annoyed them both by replying that I was an old man, and that nothing of what was being done now was in accordance with our agreement.

It seems that after this Archytas arrived at Dionysius' court—before I left and set sail after my earlier visit, I had arranged friendship and an alliance between Archytas and the Tarentines and Dionysius—and there were some others
 d in Syracuse who had heard scraps of information from Dion, and others again who had heard from them, all being full of incomplete or misunderstood philosophical smatterings. They seem to have tried to converse with Dionysius about matters

connected with what they had heard, supposing that he had listened to all my views. Dionysius is not without the natural ability to learn, and is sensitive about his mental capabilities to an astonishing degree; perhaps he was pleased with what his courtiers said, and was ashamed when it became obvious that he had learnt nothing from me when I was in Sicily. The result was that he became very eager to hear^c my teaching in more detail, and his pride encouraged him too; I have explained just now up above why he refused to listen on my previous visit; and when I had finally reached home and had refused his second invitation, as I have just described, it seems that Dionysius became thoroughly alarmed at the thought that some might possibly suppose that after my experiences I despised his nature and disposition, and also his manner of life, and that I would not come^{339a} to him again because I disapproved. It is best that I should tell the truth, and then submit to the consequences if anyone after hearing what happened in fact despises my philosophy, and supposes that the tyrant was in the right.

Dionysius summoned me the third time, sending a trireme to make my journey easy, and with it several of my Sicilian acquaintances, including Archedemus, one of Archytas' friends, for whom the tyrant thought that I had more regard than for anyone else in Sicily. They all brought the same^b news that Dionysius had made astonishing progress in philosophy. Dionysius sent a very long letter; he knew how I felt towards Dion, and he knew Dion's eagerness that I should set sail and come to Syracuse, and the letter's opening words were designed to suit these circumstances. "Dionysius to Plato", it read—then followed the usual^c formalities, and the next thing he said was, "If you do as we ask and come now to Sicily, in the first place Dion's affairs will be arranged in accordance with your wishes, whatever they may be. I know your wishes will be reasonable, and I shall agree. Otherwise, none of Dion's affairs,

neither the fate of his interests nor of his person, will turn out as you wish." This was what he said; the rest would be of little interest, and irrelevant. Other letters too kept coming, from Archytas and the Tarentines, praising Dionysius' interest in philosophy, and saying that if I did not come now I should be utterly destroying those bonds of friendship that had been created through me between themselves and Dionysius, bonds that were of great importance politically.

When these invitations were made at that time in the terms that I have described, with those in Sicily and Italy dragging me away, and my Athenian friends begging and simply forcing me to go, the same old argument presented itself to me again, that I must not betray Dion or my friends and comrades in Tarentum; and I had a lurking feeling that it was really not surprising if a young man who heard about worth-while pursuits and was quick to learn should come to desire the best way of life. I ought therefore to test the matter thoroughly and see what the result was to be; I must not shirk the task, or lay myself open to such a very real reproach, in case anyone should actually put these charges into words.

^{340a} So I set out under cover of this reasoning—very frightened, and foreboding ill, naturally enough; but when I came it really was a case of "the third to the Saviour", for I was fortunate enough to be saved again; and next after God the thanks are due to Dionysius, for although they wanted to kill me, he prevented them, and showed some respect for my position.

^b On my arrival, I thought that I should first make a test to see whether Dionysius really had been fired, as it were, with a love of wisdom, or whether these many rumours that had come to Athens were vain and untrue. There is a good method of putting such questions to the test, a method very appropriate for tyrants, and especially such as have filled their heads with scraps of philosophical chit-chat, as

immediately upon my arrival I saw that Dionysius had done to a very large extent. One must show them wherein all the business of philosophy consists, what is its nature, what are its concerns, and how much labour it involves. He who^c hears all this, if he really has a philosophical nature, and being inspired by the gods is a kindred spirit worthy of undertaking it, thinks that he has heard of a wonderful journey which he must now make every effort to accomplish, since any other life would not be worth living. After this he urges on both himself and his guide, and does not relax until either he finishes the course, or attains powers that enable him to act as his own guide, without having anyone else to show him the way. He who has the philosophical^d nature lives in this way and along these lines, in his daily life performing those tasks which form his regular occupation, whatever it may be, but amidst everything clinging to philosophy, and to whatever daily regimen will best make him quick to learn, and improve his memory and powers of reasoning, providing him with a sober temperament; the opposite way of life he always loathes. Those who are not true philosophers, but men whose minds have a coating of opinion, like the tan which the scorching of the sun may produce upon the body, when they see how much has to be learnt and how great is the effort involved, and how the daily^e life of moderation best suits the thing, consider it difficult and impossible for themselves to undertake; and they are in fact not capable of practising it. Others of them persuade^{341a} themselves that they have sufficiently heard all that there is to hear, and that they need to engage in no further study. This is the sure and safest test to show up those who are luxurious and delicate and cannot labour on to the end, and to show them up in such a way that they cannot blame their guides but only themselves for their inability to do all that is necessary for the accomplishment of the matter in hand.

These were the reasons why I said what I did to Dionysius

b on that occasion. I did not explain everything to him, nor did he request that I should. He pretended to know a great deal, including all that was most important, and to be sufficiently equipped in these respects on account of what he had heard from the others. I hear that later on he wrote a book about what he then heard, putting it together as a handbook of his own, as though it were very different from what he had heard; but of this I know nothing for certain. I know that others have written about these same subjects, but as to who they are—why, they do not even “know themselves.”* This much I can say about all who have
c written or will write in the future, all who say that they have knowledge of the matters with which I concern myself, either on the ground that they have heard about them from me or from others, or that they have discovered the truth for themselves: in my opinion, it is not possible that they can have any real knowledge of the subject. I have written no treatise on these matters, nor shall I ever write one. The truths of philosophy cannot be expressed in words as other subjects can, but after personal assistance in these studies from a guide, after living for some time with
d that guide, suddenly a flash of understanding, as it were, is kindled by a spark that leaps across, and once it has come into being within the soul it proceeds to nourish itself. Yet I am sure that if such truths were written or spoken, they would best be put into words by me, and that if they were badly expressed it would grieve me more than anybody else. If it appeared to me that they could be adequately explained to the masses in writing or in speech, what nobler object could I have achieved in my life than the bestowal upon mankind of so great a benefit by writing a book, and bringing the nature of things to the light of day for all to contemplate? But I do not think that what is called a
e thesis, when written on this subject, is any good for men,

* The reference is to the proverb, “Know Thyself”.

except for a few who can anyhow discover the truth for themselves with just a little guidance; as for the rest, it would have the unfortunate effect of filling some with unwarranted contempt, and others with lofty and vain illusions, as though they had learnt something very important. I propose to speak at even greater length on the subject, for possibly what I am trying to say may become clearer if I make this explanation. 342a

There is a sound argument which I have often used in the past but feel that I should put forward again now, to refute the man who has dared to write anything at all upon the matters under discussion. There are three ways by which we must acquire our knowledge of every single thing; fourthly, there is that knowledge itself; and the thing itself which is known and truly existent we must reckon fifth. b First a name, secondly a definition, thirdly a likeness, fourthly knowledge—if you want to understand, apply what I now say to one example, and thus grasp the universal principle. There is a thing we call "circle", whose name is this very word which we have just uttered. Next there is its definition, compounded of names and predicates: "that which is everywhere the same distance from perimeter to centre"—such might be a definition of what we call round or o-shaped or circular. Thirdly, there is the c circle that we draw and then rub out, the sphere that we turn on the lathe and then break up again—processes which the Circle Itself*, to which all these things refer, never undergoes, as being distinct from them. Fourthly, there is knowledge and intuition and true opinion about these three things; but this must in every case be regarded as one, not having its being in sounds or in shapes of bodies, but in souls, which clearly shows that it is different from the nature of the Circle Itself and from the three things that have already been mentioned. Of all these intuition comes nearest in d

* i.e. the Idea of Circle.

kinship and in likeness to the fifth, while the others are farther removed.

The same may be said about "straight" and "circular" shape, about colour, and about good and noble and just, and about all body whether manufactured or natural, fire and water and all such things, and every living creature, and every quality of character residing in the soul, and about all the actions, creations and affections that there are. Unless you grasp, at least to some extent, the four "clues" in the case of each of these, you will never completely attain to knowledge of what comes fifth.

Now there is the further consideration that these four clues serve to show the *likeness* of each thing rather than the real nature, because of the weakness of language. No one, therefore, who has any sense will dare to entrust his intuited notions to language, especially to language that is unalterable, like the words spelt out in written characters that go to form a book. You must try to understand this further point, which I am making now. Every circle that is actually drawn, and every sphere that is turned on the lathe, is full of that which is opposite to the fifth, for at every point there is a measure of straightness: whereas we say that the Circle Itself has no part, either small or large, of the nature of its opposite within itself. We say, too, that the name of an object is never reliable, and that there is nothing to prevent things that are now called "round" from being called "straight", and vice versa; and things will be no less fixed and definite if we change their names and call them by opposite terms. The same may be said of definition, since definition consists of names and predicates—nothing is really reliably fixed. Countless arguments could be put forward to show how vague and unsatisfactory is each of the four clues, but the most important one, as I said just now, is that whereas there are two things, the reality and the likeness, and the soul seeks to know not the likeness but the

essential nature, each of the four presents to the soul, whether by words or by action, that which is not being sought, and always presents in everything that is said or displayed something that the senses can refute. Thus each of the four, we might say, fills everyone with every kind of bewilderment and perplexity.

In matters when we are not even accustomed to look for the truth because of bad training, and what the likenesses reveal is sufficient for us, we are not ridiculed by each other—those who are questioned, I mean, by the questioners, and who can pull to pieces and refute the evidence of the four clues. But on any occasion when we require an answer and an explanation revealing the fifth, anyone who has the ability to trip up the respondent and chooses to do so prevails, and makes the man who is giving an exposition by means of speech or writing or any kind of answer seem to the majority of the observers to know nothing of those matters about which he is trying to write or speak; they are often unaware that the understanding of the writer or speaker is not shown to be at fault, but rather the weak and inadequate nature of each of the four clues. But the discussion of all of these, passing upwards and then downwards and taking each point severally into account, with difficulty brings to birth in the mind of one whose nature is sound knowledge of something that is itself sound by nature. But if the pupil be of an *unsuitable* nature, as the state of the soul in most men is unsuitable for learning and for the acquirement of such character as that to which I refer—and in some instances the natural disposition has been completely corrupted—^{344a} then not even Lynceus* could make such a pupil see. In a word, neither quickness in learning nor good memory

^{343c}: I now interpret thus despite the note in my edition: cf. "the weak and inadequate nature of each of the four clues", and with "discussion of all of these", cf. b. *infra* ("When all of these. . .").

* A proverbially keen-sighted man.

could ever make the man whose nature is not akin to the thing perceive the truth, for comprehension cannot possibly grow up within an alien disposition: so that neither those who are not predisposed and akin to what is just and to everything else that is noble and good (even though some may be quick to learn or remember some things, and others other things), nor again those who are akin but are slow to learn and of poor memory—none of these will ever learn truth about virtue and vice to the full extent of what is possible. For one must learn these things simultaneously with what is true and what is false about all existence, using all manner of effort over a long period of time, as I said to begin with. When all of these sets of things, names and definitions and visible and sensible appearances, are laboriously discussed and compared with one another, being tested with well-intentioned (not vindictive) tests, as the guides use the method of question and answer, there suddenly shines forth a flash of understanding and intuitive perception, reaching as far as man can reach.

c For these reasons no one who is at all serious will ever write about serious matters, and so expose them before all the world, where jealousy and lack of understanding prevail. In a word, you must conclude from all this that whenever you see written treatises, whether they have to do with the laws of a lawgiver or with anything else, whatever kind of treatises they may be, they were not his most serious interests—if he is at all a serious-minded man—but his chief thoughts lie stored elsewhere: they, out of all that he possesses, occupy the fairest place. If these ideas that he put into d his writings were really seriously valued, then someone—not a god, but a man—"has stolen his wits away".

He who has followed this story or digression will fully understand that if Dionysius or any other lesser or greater man has written anything about the chief and primary facts of nature, he can have heard or learnt nothing sound about

the subjects on which he wrote, at least according to my judgment; for if he had, he would have respected them as much as I do, and would not have risked casting them out before a society that was out of harmony and out of sympathy with them. He did not write as an aid to memory, for there is no fear of anyone forgetting the truth, once he has comprehended it in his soul; it lies within the smallest compass of all things; if he did write, he wrote out of base ambition, whether he pretended that the book was his own original work or the result of his education, of which indeed he was not worthy if he coveted the reputation to be derived from its enjoyment. If his knowledge resulted from the one period ^{345a} of study he had with me—well, it might be the result of his education, though how it came about "goodness knows", as the Thebans say; for I explained matters as I have described, and on one occasion only, and never once did I touch upon them after that.

Anyone who cares to learn how these events came to pass must now consider the next question, for what reason I did not go through these matters a second time and a third and many times over; whether it was because Dionysius listened only once and then thought he knew all, and ^b did, in fact, understand sufficiently, or whether he thought that what I talked about was not worth learning, or lastly, whether he considered that these matters were not for him, but were too difficult, and that he would really not be able to give attention to knowledge and virtue throughout his life. If he thought they were not worth learning, he will be fighting against many witnesses who say the opposite—many, moreover, who would be far more capable of judging on such matters than Dionysius. If he thought that he had discovered or learnt the truths already, and that they were of value in the education of a liberal mind, how, unless he ^c be a most extraordinary person, could he have so lightly shown disrespect for the guide who possessed this knowledge

to begin with? I will now describe how he showed this disrespect.

Hitherto Dionysius had allowed Dion to remain in possession of his property and to receive the income from his estate, but not long after the events which I have described he refused to allow his trustees to send the money any longer to the Peloponnese, as though he had altogether forgotten his letter to me. He said now that this estate was no longer d Dion's, but the property of Dion's son, who was his (Dionysius') nephew and now legally his ward. The course of events during that period of my stay was, up to this point, such as I have described, and when these new developments occurred, I felt that I had seen clearly the true measure of Dionysius' keenness on philosophy; and I had every reason to be angry, whether I chose to show it or not. It was then already summer, and ships were sailing out again; and I decided that while I ought not to blame Dionysius any more than myself and those who had forced me for the third time e into the strait of Scylla, "that I might steer my course back to deadly Charybdis once again", I should nevertheless tell Dionysius that it was impossible for me to stay now that Dion had been treated with so much ignominy. Dionysius tried to reassure me, and begged me to stay, thinking that it did not look well for himself that I should go at once and personally convey to Greece the news of such proceedings; but when he found that he could not persuade me to stay, he said he would prepare an escort for me.

346a I was intending to embark and sail away on any one of the boats that happened to be sailing, being thoroughly annoyed, and thinking that I ought to risk the consequences, whatever they might be in the event of my being caught, for it was quite clear that I was not the aggressor but the aggrieved; but Dionysius, seeing that I was by no means anxious to stay, devised the following scheme to keep me at Syracuse

for the whole of that sailing season. "Let Dion and Dion's affairs", he said, "no longer be a cause of constant quarrel between us. For your sake I will do this for Dion: I think b that he should take his possessions and live in the Peloponnese, not as an exile, but in the knowledge that he could, if he chose, come and live here, whenever he and I and you, his friends, agreed that he should; and this should be on the understanding that he does not plot against me, and that you and your relations and Dion's relations here become surety for the agreement, while Dion must provide you with what surety you need. The money he takes may be c invested in the Peloponnese and at Athens with anyone you like, and Dion may enjoy the interest, but have no power to withdraw the capital without your consent. For my part I do not feel satisfied that if he had control of his money—which is no small sum—he would act fairly towards me; but I trust you and your friends more. Consider whether this proposal satisfies you, and on these conditions stay for this year, and next season you can take this money and depart; and I know that Dion will be very grateful to you if you do d all this for him."

When I heard this proposal I was annoyed, but upon reflection I said that I would give him my decision on the question the next day, and we left the matter at that. Afterwards, when I was alone, I pondered deeply, very much bewildered. The first consideration that presented itself in the course of my deliberations was this: "Suppose that Dionysius does not intend to carry out any of his promises, e and when I have gone writes a specious letter to Dion, and makes many of his friends write as well, telling Dion of his present proposal and saying that while he himself wanted to make the agreement, Plato refused to do what he suggested, and completely disregarded Dion's interests; and suppose that on top of this he still refuses to let me go, not in fact personally instructing any of his captains to

347a take me, and instead makes it clear to all, as he easily can, that he does not wish me to leave; will anyone then be willing to take me on board ship, even if I do try to escape from Dionysius' palace?" In addition to my other worries, I was living in the garden that surrounded the palace, from which not even the sentry at the gate would have let me go unless special instructions had been sent him from Dionysius. "On the other hand, if I do wait the year, I shall be able to write and tell Dion of my situation and of all that I am doing, and if Dionysius does fulfil any of his promises, I shall have achieved something not altogether to be despised; b for Dion's property is perhaps, at a correct valuation, worth not less than a hundred talents. If, after all, the present absurd situation develops in the way that seems most probable, I do not know what I shall do. But still I must, perhaps, endure for one year longer, and try to prove the nature of Dionysius' schemes by letting them take their course."

This was my decision, and the next day I told Dionysius, c "I have decided to stay. But", I said, "I do not think you should consider me empowered to act on Dion's behalf. I ask you jointly with me to send a letter to Dion telling him of our present agreement, and asking him whether he is satisfied; and if he is not, but wants something different which he considers fairer, he must write at once and tell us. But I do not think you should do anything rash just yet with regard to his affairs."

This was what I said, and this was the agreement that we made almost exactly as I have stated it. After this the boats sailed away, and it was no longer possible for me to leave— d when Dionysius somehow remembered that he had said that only half of the property must belong to Dion, the other

347b: "absurd situation." I am now accepting Professor Post's argument as to the reading, *The Vatican Plato and its Relations*, p. 14. The Oxford text reading will mean, "If what present indications suggest should in fact develop into the result that seems most probable."

half being reserved for Dion's son. He said that he would sell it all, and that when it had been sold he would give me half of the proceeds to take to Dion, and would leave half behind for Dion's son: this was the fairest way.

I was struck dumb with amazement at what he said. I thought it was quite absurd to try to make any reply, but still I said that we ought to wait for Dion's letter, and write again to tell him of these new proposals. But Dionysius followed up this pronouncement of his by recklessly selling the whole of Dion's property in the manner and according^e to the terms that pleased him best, and to purchasers he chose; to me he addressed not a word about the matter, and I for my part in the same way never again discussed Dion's affairs with him. I felt that that was no longer doing any good.

Up to this time I had supported the cause of philosophy and the interests of my friends in the way that I have described. After this Dionysius and I went our separate ways; I was looking out to sea, like a bird yearning to fly^{348a} away, while Dionysius was trying to work out how he could shoo me away without spending any of Dion's wealth. However, before all of Sicily we professed to be friends.

Now Dionysius, contrary to his father's methods, made an attempt to lower the pay of the veterans among his mercenaries. The men, enraged, gathered in crowds and said that they would not permit it. Dionysius prepared to use force, shutting the gates of the acropolis, but the mercenaries charged at the walls, raising a fierce and barbarous war-cry. Dionysius, smitten with terror at this procedure, granted the peltasts there assembled all that they demanded, and even more besides. The rumour soon spread that Heraclides had been responsible for the whole of this rebellion, and Heraclides, hearing of the report, made haste to disappear. Dionysius tried to catch him, but failing to do so summoned Theodotes to the garden. It so happened

that I was strolling in the garden at the time. Of the rest of their conversation I neither know nor heard anything, but I do know and remember what Theodotes said to Dionysius in my presence. "Plato", he said, "I am trying to persuade Dionysius here that if I succeed in fetching Heraclides here to discuss the charges that have now been brought against him, and if the decision be reached that he should no longer reside in Sicily—well, I think that he should sail away with his wife and son to the Peloponnese and, so long as he does no harm to Dionysius, live there in the enjoyment of the revenue of his estate. I have sent for him already, and will send for him again now, in the hope that he may answer one or other of my invitations to come. But I beg and beseech Dionysius that if anyone comes across Heraclides anywhere in the country or here in the town, nothing untoward may happen to him, but that he may simply be sent away from Sicily until it be Dionysius' pleasure that he should return. Do you agree to this?" he asked, turning to Dionysius. "I agree", said the tyrant, "I promise that even if he be found in your own house, no harm shall be done to him contrary to the present agreement."

During the evening of the following day Eurybius and Theodotes came to me in hot haste, in a state of great excitement. "Plato", said Theodotes, "you were present yesterday, were you not, when Dionysius made an agreement with us about Heraclides?" "Certainly I was", I replied. "Well", he said, "peltasts are at this moment scouring the country in an effort to catch Heraclides, and he must be somewhere about round here. Do please come with us to 349^a Dionysius." So we went and were granted an audience, and while they stood in silent grief I spoke to the tyrant. "My friends here", I said, "are afraid that you may take some fresh action about Heraclides, contrary to yesterday's agreement. It looks to me as though there is evidence that

he has come this way." When Dionysius heard this he went very red, and turned all sorts of colours, like a man in a rage. Theodotes fell down before him and grasped his hand ^b and wept, and begged him not to do any such thing. I interrupted and comforted him, and said, "Cheer up, Theodotes, Dionysius will not have the heart to do anything contrary to yesterday's agreement." And Dionysius looked at me, with the look of a veritable tyrant, and said, "I made no agreement with you, of any kind whatsoever." "Good heavens, yes," I said, "yes, you did: that you would not do precisely what he is now begging you not to do." With these words I turned and walked out.

After that Dionysius continued the hunt for Heraclides, ^c and Theodotes kept sending messages in attempts to warn Heraclides to escape. Dionysius sent Teisias and some peltasts with orders to continue the search, but Heraclides, it was said, managed to make good his escape into Carthaginian territory, eluding his pursuers by a matter of a few hours.

It now seemed to Dionysius that his old plan not to restore Dion's capital could have plausible grounds of enmity with me to back it. First he sent me outside the acropolis, ^d finding an excuse in the fact that the women had to celebrate a ten-day festival of sacrifice in the garden in which I was living. He instructed me to remain outside during this period at the house of Archedemus. While I was staying there, Theodotes sent for me, and complained bitterly about what had happened, blaming Dionysius. The tyrant, hearing that I had visited Theodotes, and treating this as another excuse for quarrelling with me, akin to the former one, sent a messenger and asked whether I had in fact ^e received an invitation from Theodotes and visited his house. "Certainly", I replied. "Then I am instructed", said the messenger, "to inform you that you are acting very improperly in always treating Dion and his friends as of more

account than Dionysius." That was the message, and Dionysius never invited me again to the palace, as though it were now clear that Theodotes and Heraclides were my friends, but that he was an enemy, and he supposed that I bore him ill-will, because Dion's capital was being completely drained.

I continued to live henceforth outside the acropolis among the mercenaries. Some friends, in particular those of the ships' crews who were from Athens, my fellow-countrymen, frequently came to me with the warning that slanderous rumours about me had been spread among the peltasts, and that some of them were threatening that, if they caught me they would put me to death. I proceeded to devise the following means of escape: I sent word to Archytas and my other friends at Tarentum, telling them of the plight I was in. Under pretext of sending an embassy
b from their city, they despatched a thirty-oared ship carrying one of themselves, Lamiscus by name, who on his arrival interceded with Dionysius on my behalf. He told the tyrant that I wanted to leave, and asked him to let me. Dionysius thereupon agreed to my departure, and giving me money for the journey sent me on my way. As for Dion's capital, I for my part made no further requests, and none of it was restored.

I went to Olympia in the Peloponnese, and there met Dion, a spectator at the Games. I told him all that had happened, and he, calling Zeus to witness the wrongs that he had suffered, urged me and my relatives and friends to prepare to take
c vengeance on Dionysius—in my case, because of the deceitful manner in which Dionysius had treated his guest, and in his own because of his undeserved deportation and exile. When I heard the suggestion, I told him to invite our friends, if he chose; "but as for me", I said, "you and the others in a way forced me to share Dionysius' table and his health, and to join him in religious observances. Possibly in view of the many slanderous reports he really believed that I was

plotting with you against himself and the tyranny; and yet he did not kill me, but showed respect for my position. I am too old to fight as almost anybody's ally now, and I am d here to mediate between you, should you want to make peace with each other and do some good; but so long as you want to do harm, invite others to assist you." That was my reply. I was thoroughly tired of my unfortunate Odyssey in the region of Sicily. But they paid no heed and disregarded my offers of mediation, with the result that they brought upon themselves all the evils that have now occurred—evils which, if Dionysius had restored Dion's capital, or had somehow made a reconciliation with Dion, would never e have occurred at all, so far as mortal man can see; for I could easily have restrained Dion by expressing my wishes and using my influence. As it is, by fighting against each other they have filled the whole world with trouble.

Yet Dion had the same hopes for his own influence and 351a for his friends and for his country as I should say that I myself or any sensible man should have. He would have aimed at attaining the highest power and honour by conferring the highest benefits. That is not done by making yourself or your friends or your country rich, by continually plotting and gathering conspirators round you, by being poor in spirit and having no control of yourself, yielding through cowardice to the temptations of pleasure; and then by killing all the rich, calling them enemies, by distributing b their wealth and inviting your helpers and fellow-conspirators to take their share, so that no one may complain that he is poor and lay the blame on you. It is the same if a man tries to benefit his city in this way, by dividing up under popular decree the property of the few among the many; or if he rules over a city that is powerful and is the centre

351a: Burnet's text assumes an anacoluthon. I insert a dash before "he would have aimed".

c of a large empire, and wrongfully divides up the capital of the smaller nations among his own fellow-citizens.

No one, neither Dion nor anyone else, will of his own free choice enter upon a position of power that must incur retribution both for himself and his family for ever; rather will a man turn to constitutional government and the establishment of the fairest and best laws, a constitution brought about without a single murder or death. This was the present aim of Dion, who preferred to suffer wrong rather than to do it; and though he tried to avoid such suffering, he nevertheless slipped up when he was on the
 d very point of overcoming his enemies. Yet what happened to him need hardly cause surprise. A righteous man who has to deal with men who are wicked, a temperate and level-headed man, would never be utterly deceived about his adversaries; but he might easily have the experience of a good helmsman, who might see well enough that a storm is brewing, but fail to reckon upon the unusual and unexpected magnitude of the storm, and through his failure be overwhelmed by its force. The same mistake caused Dion's fall. He well knew that the men who tripped him were men of the
 e baser sort, but he did not allow for the extent of their ignorance and of their villainy and brutishness; hence he was tripped up and fell, bringing untold grief upon the whole of Sicily.

352a As for the situation that results from the events that I have described, all the advice that I have to give has more or less been given, and let that now suffice. It seemed to me that I had to explain why I undertook my second journey to Sicily, because of the strange and unexpected nature of all that then occurred. If my account has made these happenings more comprehensible and it has become clear that there were good reasons for all that occurred, then my present narrative has not exceeded due measure, but has fully served its purpose.

THE PLATONIC LETTERS

THE following table indicates the measure of acceptance accorded in recent years to the thirteen letters that have come down to us ascribed to Plato. Initials refer to the following: Ritter (1910), Hackforth (1913:=H₁), Wilamowitz (1920), Howald (1923:=H₂), Post (1925:=P₁), Souilhé (1926), Taylor (1926, 1937), Field (1930), Novotný (1930), Harward (1932:=H₃), Morrow (1935), Pasquali (1938:=P₂). A question-mark following an initial indicates doubt on the part of the writer concerned. Absence of an initial indicates rejection. All accept Letters VII and VIII, and all reject Letter I; these are not included in the list.

Cherniss is now the only writer, so far as I know, who rejects Letter VII (see p. 192).

Letter No.

- II. P₁ T N H₃
- III. R H₁ P₁ T F N H₃ M
- IV. R? H₁ P₁ T F N H₃ M
- V. T F N H₃ M?
- VI. W H₂ P₁ T F N H₃ M P₂
- IX. H₁ ? T F N H₃
- X. H₁ ? P₁ T F N H₃ M P₂?
- XI. H₁? W? P₁ T F N H₃ P₂
- XII. T? N H₃
- XIII. H₁ P₁ T F N H₃ M?

BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

READERS who have little or no acquaintance with the subject will find F. M. Cornford's *Before and After Socrates* (1932) a good introduction to Greek philosophy, and his translation of the *Republic* with running commentary is also excellent. For Plato's other works, there are the translations in the Loeb series. R. Nettleship's *Lectures on the Republic* will be found useful, and the relevant chapters in vols. IV, V, and VI of the *Cambridge Ancient History* are concise and extremely clear. The following works are more detailed.

On the Pre-Socratics:

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Kathleen Freeman, *Companion to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (1946).

W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Gifford Lectures, 1936: published 1948).

Professor Cornford's article on Parmenides in *C.Q.* XXVII, 1933, is important, and contains a lucid account of the Pythagorean theory of numbers.

On Plato:

G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought*.

L. Robin, *Greek Thought*.

A. E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work*.

(But his interpretation is often very questionable in view of his identification of the Platonic with the historical Socrates. On this question the authorities are: A. S. Ferguson, *C.Q.* VII, 1913, pp. 157 seq.; L. Robin, *Revue des Études Grecques*, XXIX, 1916, pp. 19-65.)

Cornford's *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* and *Plato's Cosmology* provide translations of the *Theætetus*, *Sophist*, and *Timæus* with running commentary, and R. Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure*, treats the *Philebus* in the same way. A discussion of Plato's alleged identification of Ideas with numbers is to be found in W. D. Ross's introduction to his edition of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and in H. Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (1945), and *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (1944); but these works are only for the specialist.

We may also mention:

Edwyn Bevan, *Later Greek Religion*.

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REFERENCES

- ¹ Coningsby.
- ² *Christianity*, p. 76.
- ³ Diog. L. III, 2-3.
- ⁴ They fought at Megara in 424 B.C. (Rep. 368c).
- ⁵ Cf. *Charm.* 158a.
- ⁶ Cf. *Parm.*, *ad init.*
- ⁷ VII, 87, 5.
- ⁸ *Ep. VII*, 324e.
- ⁹ Diog. L. III, 6.
- ¹⁰ *Arete* means efficiency or excellence in the performance of any function, but it is now applied specially to the way in which a man should behave in order to make the most of his humanity.
- ¹¹ Cf. *Ath. Pol.* 35.
- ¹² Hackforth, *Composition of Plato's Apology*, pp. 58 seq.
- ¹³ *Life of Plato*, §IV.
- ¹⁴ *Met.* 987a29.
- ¹⁵ III, 6.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* II, 106.
- ¹⁷ Lutoslawski, *Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic*, p. 43.
- ¹⁸ *Rep.* I, X, 16.
- ¹⁹ Diog. L. III, 8.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 6.
- ²¹ *Dion* II, 2.
- ²² *Dion* IV, 3 and VIII, 2-3.
- ²³ *Ep. IV*, *ad fin.*
- ²⁴ Diog. L. III, 18; Plut., *Dion* V, 1-2; Olymp., *Plato*, §IV.
- ²⁵ Nepos, *Dion* II, 3; Diodorus XV, 7; Plut., *Dion* V, 3; Diog. L. III, 19-21. Cf. Olymp., *Plato*, §V, Athen. XI, 507b.
- ²⁶ *Dion* VI.
- ²⁷ *Adv. Colot.* 1126c.
- ²⁸ Speusippus ap. Athen. XI, 506e.
- ²⁹ *Phædrus* 276e-277a.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 277e.
- ³¹ *Ag. Soph.* 21.
- ³² *Antid.* 271, cf. 285.
- ³³ R. L. Howland, C.Q. XXXI, 1937, p. 152.
- ³⁴ 329b-330b.
- ³⁵ See G. R. Morrow, *Studies in the Platonic Epistles*, Illinois Studies in Lang. and Lit., vol. XVIII, pp. 146-55.
- ³⁶ Plut., *Dion* IX, 2-3.
- ³⁷ IV, 6.
- ³⁸ *Dion* XIII, 1-2.
- ³⁹ 316a.
- ⁴⁰ Plut., *Dion* VII, 4; cf. *Ar. Pol.* V, 10, 1312a.
- ⁴¹ *Dion* II, 1-2.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, XIV, 3.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, XVII, 1.
- ⁴⁴ See p. 189.
- ⁴⁵ Plut., *Dion* XXI, 3.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XXII.
- ⁴⁷ See Morrow, op. cit.
- ⁴⁸ 310bc.
- ⁴⁹ Plut., *Dion* XXII seq.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, LII.
- ⁵¹ *Ep. IV*, 321c.
- ⁵² Plut., *Dion* LIV.
- ⁵³ Plut., *Timoleon* I.
- ⁵⁴ Justin XXI, 1.
- ⁵⁵ Athen. XI, 508ef.
- ⁵⁶ 356a.
- ⁵⁷ *Timoleon* I.
- ⁵⁸ Justin XXI, 5.
- ⁵⁹ *Ep. IV*, 320b.
- ⁶⁰ *Ep. IX*, 358a.
- ⁶¹ *Tim.* 47b.
- ⁶² *Ph.* 114c.
- ⁶³ §VI.
- ⁶⁴ I do not mention the *Sisyphus*, *Demodocus*, *Alcyon*, *Eryxias*, *Definitions*, *Axiochus*, *Phæacians*, *Chelidon*, *Seventh Day*, *Epimenides*—Diogenes' list of spuria; nor the *Second Alcibiades* and *Epinomis*, which were regarded with suspicion in antiquity—the latter, it is true, on rather

slender grounds; nor works which are generally condemned to-day.—*Hipparchus, Rivals, Theages, Clitophon, Minos*; nor works about which opinion is divided—*First Alcibiades, Ion, Menexenus, Hippias Major and Minor*. On the *Epistles* see p. 189.

⁶⁵ *Met.* 987ab, 1078b.

⁶⁶ 97cd.

⁶⁷ See Hackforth, op. cit.

⁶⁸ 304d.

⁶⁹ 305c.

⁷⁰ Cf. F. M. Cornford, *J.H.S.*

LXII, 1942, p. 5.

⁷¹ See R. Hackforth, *C.Q.* XXII, 1928, pp. 39 seq.; F. M. Cornford, *C.A.H.* vol. VI, p. 313; A. E. Taylor, *Plato*, p. 260.

⁷² Cf. F. M. Cornford, trans. of *Rep.*, introd., p. xx.

⁷³ Cf. R. Howland, op. cit.

⁷⁴ 519a.

⁷⁵ 527cde.

⁷⁶ 493b.

⁷⁷ Cf. F. M. Cornford, *J.H.S.* LXII, 1942, pp. I seq.

⁷⁸ *Frag.* 41 (Bywater).

⁷⁹ *Frag.* 42.

⁸⁰ 98b seq.

⁸¹ *De gen. corr.* A, 8, 324b35 seq. Plato never mentions Democritus by name, but see Cornford, *P.T.K.*, pp. 231–2.

⁸² Aetius IV, 9, 8.

⁸³ "When Socrates was gone he attached himself to Cratylus the Heraclitean, and to Hermogenes who professed the philosophy of Parmenides" (*Diog. L.* III, 6).

⁸⁴ 247c.

⁸⁵ Cf. F. M. Cornford, *C.Q.* XXVII, 1933, pp. 104–6.

⁸⁶ *Met.* 987b28.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 987b15.

⁸⁸ On Aristotle's evidence see Ross, ed. *Met.*, vol. I, pp. lvii seq.; but cf. Cherniss (see p. 150).

⁸⁹ 24a.

⁹⁰ 98a.

⁹¹ See R. Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure*, p. 142–3.

⁹² *Rep.* VI, 511, tr. Cornford.

⁹³ *Met.* 987a29 seq., tr. Tredennick (Loeb ed.).

⁹⁴ 211bc, 212a.

⁹⁵ *Busiris* 222c.

⁹⁶ *Met.* 987ab, 1078b.

⁹⁷ *Apol.* 29ab, 40c–41c.

⁹⁸ 62b.

⁹⁹ 61d.

¹⁰⁰ H. Williamson, ed. *Phædo*, p. 140.

¹⁰¹ 78a.

¹⁰² 114c.

¹⁰³ F. M. Cornford, *C.Q.* VI, 1912, pp. 246–68. Cf. R. Hackforth, *C.Q.* VII, 1913, pp. 265–72.

¹⁰⁴ R. H. S. Crossman, *Plato To-day*. See report of F. M. Cornford's paper read to the Class. Assn., *Proceedings*, May 1942.

¹⁰⁵ III, 415a–c, tr. Cornford (as for the *Republic* throughout).

¹⁰⁶ IV, 420b.

¹⁰⁷ III, 416e.

¹⁰⁸ IV, 422e.

¹⁰⁹ *Aeschylus and Athens*.

¹¹⁰ VI, 500d.

¹¹¹ II, 382b.

¹¹² V, 472de.

¹¹³ VI, 511c.

¹¹⁴ VII, 537c.

¹¹⁵ VII, 529cd.

¹¹⁶ *Ap. Athen.* II, 59d (fr. 287 Koch).

¹¹⁷ VI, 494a.

¹¹⁸ *Diog. L.* III, 5; *Olymp.*, *Plato* §III; cf. Aelian, *Var. Hist.* II, 30.

¹¹⁹ X, 607b.

¹²⁰ X, 617e.

¹²¹ R. Howland, *C.Q.* XXXI, 1937, p. 152 seq.

¹²² 279a9.

¹²³ *Helen* 209.

¹²⁴ 275de.

¹²⁵ *Plato*, pp. 350 seq.

¹²⁶ Cf. Cornford, *P.T.K.*, p. 169, and Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure*, p. 2.

¹²⁷ Cf. Hackforth, loc. cit.

¹²⁸ 301de.

¹²⁹ 303a.

¹³⁰ 305e.

- ¹³¹ Op. cit., pp. 38-43.
¹³² Cornford, *P.C.*, p. 7.
¹³³ *Tim.* 29d.
¹³⁴ See Cornford, *C.A.H.* VI, p. 330, and cf. Taylor, *Plato*, pp. 440-1.
¹³⁵ See Haigh, *Attic Theatre*.
¹³⁶ 709e-710a, tr. Bury (as for the *Laws* throughout).
¹³⁷ 711a.
¹³⁸ 712a; cf. *Rep.* 473d.
¹³⁹ 294a, 297e, tr. Fowler (Loeb ed.).
¹⁴⁰ 711e.
¹⁴¹ 744de.
¹⁴² 765e.
¹⁴³ 961c.
¹⁴⁴ 951de.
¹⁴⁵ 951e-952a.
¹⁴⁶ 632c.
¹⁴⁷ 671d.
¹⁴⁸ 964bc.
- ¹⁴⁹ 756e.
¹⁵⁰ 757d.
¹⁵¹ 757c.
¹⁵² See E. R. Dodds, *J.H.S.* LXV, 1945, pp. 19-20.
¹⁵³ 885b.
¹⁵⁴ Cf. R. Hackforth, *C.Q.* XL, 1946, pp. 118 seq.
¹⁵⁵ 745c-746a.
¹⁵⁶ 739e.
¹⁵⁷ See Ross, ed. Aristotle's *Met.*, introd., pp. lxxvii seq.
¹⁵⁸ *Plato's Examination of Pleasure*, pp. 40-1.
¹⁵⁹ *Tim.* 53b.
¹⁶⁰ *Tim.* 52a.
¹⁶¹ *Met.* 987b18-25, 991b9, 992b16, 1073a18, 1081a7, 1083a18, 1084a7.
¹⁶² *Met.* 988a10; cf. b4.
¹⁶³ *Simpl. in Phys.* IX, 151, 6; ib. 247, 33; 453, 25.

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